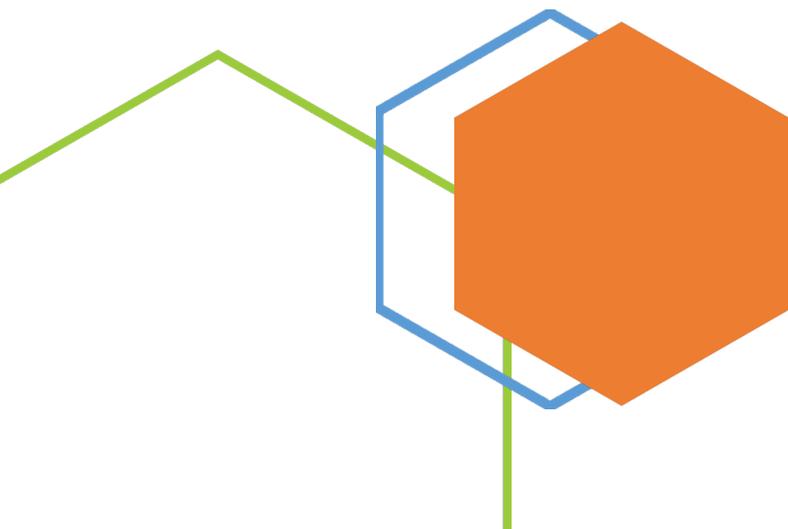




Youth Service

Regional Assessment of Need

2020 - 2023



December 2019



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Education Authority Youth Service



Foreword

The Education Authority Youth Service is pleased to introduce our Regional Assessment of Need for 2020-2023. Since April 2019 the Youth Service has engaged in 12 stakeholder events on a range of six themes relevant to the needs of children and young people, carried out in-depth desktop research and completed our largest online consultation with children and young people.

This Regional Assessment of Need delivers a new approach in design, focusing on six key areas of enquiry relevant to youth work practice and contextualised in government policy and strategy, namely the Programme for Government (2016) and the new 10 year Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029.

Since our previous Regional Assessment of Need, the statutory youth sector has undergone a restructuring to deliver improved services for children and young people. The introduction of the new Funding Scheme for Regional and Local Voluntary Youth Organisations in 2020 will further enable the sector to provide high quality Youth Services for children and young people based on need.

As in our previous Regional Assessment of Need, it remains evident that the majority of children and young people in Northern Ireland make a successful transition into adulthood, however, this assessment of need has identified that for children and young people not engaged in Youth Services their experiences present additional barriers to success.

It is also evident from those engaged in Youth Services that participation provides essential scaffolding in the lives of children and young people to help them succeed in life and engage effectively with education and wider society. However, situational barriers remain difficult to overcome, in particular for those children and young people from minority groups such as, LBGQTQ and young carers, those with learning and physical disabilities, children and young people looked after, newcomer children and young people and those from the Travelling Community.

For that reason it is important when using this assessment of need that one considers all the elements under each area of enquiry and not exclusively the survey with children and young people.

The Education Authority recognises that new needs will emerge during the life of any assessment of need, therefore, an annual review and continued stakeholder engagement will take place to consider emerging and diminishing need.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to members from the youth work sector who contributed to the design and completion of this assessment of need; in particular the role of children and young people, not only responding to the survey, but leading and contributing to our engagement events.



Arlene Kee

Assistant Director – Education Authority Youth Service

December 2019



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Introduction & Methodology



Introduction

The Department of Education (DE) invests approximately £34m in youth work to support and encourage children and young people to mature and reach their potential as valued individuals and responsible citizens. The DE notes that effective youth work enables children and young people to identify their personal and social development needs and involves them in shaping the services designed to meet those needs and improves both their own skills and life chances in order to create a better future for themselves and their communities. Effective youth work therefore contributes to the DE vision of *every young person achieving to his or her full potential at each stage of his or her development*.¹

According to the National Youth Agency *youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people*.²

Youth Services in Northern Ireland are delivered by a range of diverse groups and organisations, including statutory, voluntary, uniformed and church based, many of which are supported with grants from the Education Authority (EA). These range from rural groups with small memberships to large urban organisations.

Youth provision is delivered directly to children and young people in a variety of settings including; full-time and part-time youth centres; outdoor learning centres; schools; outreach and detached. Youth Services also deliver specialist programmes of support, particularly focussed on improving the

outcomes for marginalised or vulnerable children and young people, enhancing their inclusion and participation.

Youth Services in Northern Ireland are constantly innovating and evolving to meet the present and emerging needs of children and young people. Youth work can be categorised broadly into two types, Generic and Targeted.

Generic Provision

Generic youth provision ensures that supportive environments, delivering the youth work curriculum, are made available to a significant proportion of children and young people throughout our communities. This allows them to enhance their personal skills, their levels of motivation and general resilience and to develop their ability to interact with other children, young people and adults.

Targeted Provision

Targeted provision seeks to address the direct impact of exclusion and marginalisation, addressing key themes of work, such as risk-taking behaviour, sectarianism and racism, disaffection and low levels of attainment in school, whilst also focusing resources on specific groups of children and young people who are most marginalised, including those from Section 75 groupings. The targeting of provision is aimed at meeting policy priorities and ensuring that Youth Services are positioned to tackle the impact of economic and social deprivation, particularly as deprivation and exclusion affects the ability of children and young people to make the most of their life chances and general education.

Structured formal planning takes place throughout Youth Services (regionally and locally) in order to effectively allocate staff and resources in response to policy priorities, DE targets and an objective assessment of need. Regional Planning, therefore,

¹ Department of Education, 2013, Priorities for Youth – Improving Young People’s Lives Through Youth Work, Department of Education, Bangor.

² <https://nya.org.uk/careers-youth-work/what-is-youth-work/>

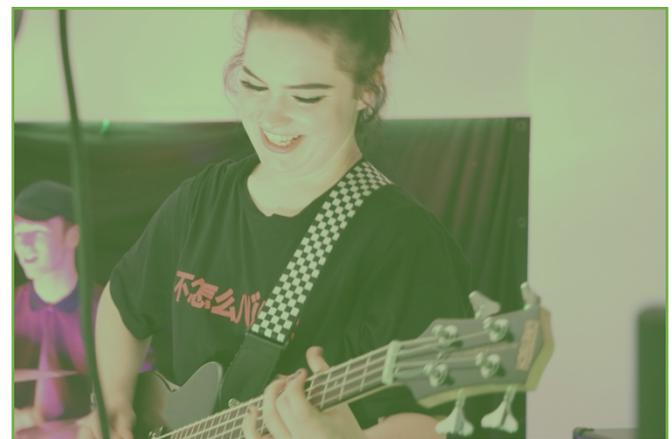
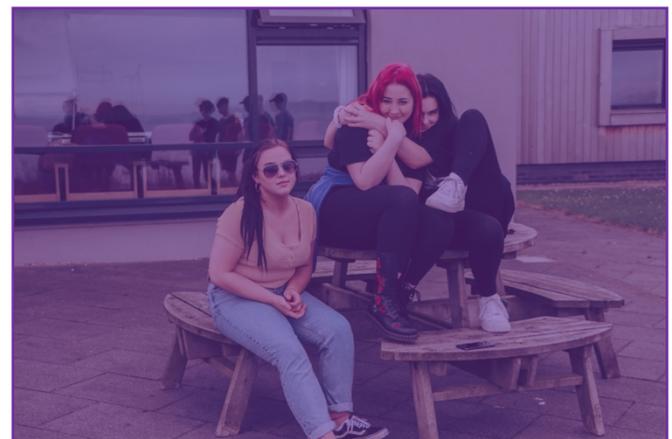
is part of a coherent planning framework established within EA Youth Service.

Purpose

An assessment of need is the first phase in the process of informing the direction of a policy or strategy to support a particular group or issue. A systematic assessment of need ensures that decisions made are subjective and evidence based. The purpose of this Regional Assessment of Need is to identify the big picture in terms of the needs and inequalities facing children and young people and vulnerable groups whose needs are not currently being met and who experience poor educational, health or social outcomes. This needs assessment will identify unmet need and inform service planning and resource allocation ensuring improved outcomes for children and young people and a reduction in the inequalities they face.

This assessment of need will therefore assist the EA Youth Service to identify needs, determine priorities, allocate resources and make organisational decisions and improvements. As the first phase of the planning process, it will involve collecting information about its target population, children and young people, decide what needs are being met, determine what needs are not being met and identify emerging need.

Understanding the needs of children and young people, demographic changes and the geographical differences in which they reside allow planners, managers and providers to ensure that the right services are available in the right place at the right time.



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
Margaret Mead

Methodology

Priorities for Youth maintains that the strategic planning and resourcing of youth work must address the assessed need for youth work interventions. Therefore, an effective assessment of need is imperative given that DE funded youth work must be set within the context of prioritised age ranges, priority groups and a clear definition of the need for targeted interventions, alongside an element of non-targeted provision that is assessed as needed.

Quantifying the needs of children and young people is a complex and difficult task. Northern Ireland is a large geographical area with broad ranging and diverse needs and issues. There is a clear variation in the levels of needs across the region, with some areas facing greater challenges than others.

A range of quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used to inform this assessment of need. The most up to date data and statistics from a range of government and statutory sources along with recent, relevant reports have been analysed and examined. An extensive consultation with children and young people and key stakeholders was also undertaken.

The information gleaned from the research has been collated and analysed and the evidence gathered has been used to compile this report, highlighting the key issues and levels of need affecting children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Where possible quantitative and qualitative data have been used to inform this needs assessment. The information and data used in the assessment of need process came from a variety of sources, including the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), the Police Service of

Northern Ireland, the Department of Education, Health Trusts and other government and statutory agencies.

All the information used was publicly available and is objective and unambiguous. The datasets were also related to outcomes and had a clear focus on educational underachievement and disadvantage.

Within this document, assessed needs are set within a framework for planning that take into account current government policy, in particular those identified by DE in its policy document, *Priorities for Youth*. The following are some of the key themes that have been identified: demographics; deprivation; education; health and wellbeing; proximity to services; and crime and disorder.

Desktop Research

The initial stages of the Regional Assessment of Need involved desktop research. This process included analysing existing assessment of need models, both national and international, to gain an insight into good practice and assist in the design and development of the EA Youth Service's Regional Assessment of Need.

Desktop research was also used to gather and analyse qualitative information from a range of sources. These sources were generally from government departments or other statutory agencies. The information collected from these sources helped identify key priority areas of need facing children and young people in Northern Ireland. A review of recent, relevant literature was also undertaken. Evidence gathered from these documents and reports was used to support the original findings and helped inform the overall report.

Surveys

Stakeholders' voices, especially those of children and young people, are important to both DE and EA in the design and delivery of Youth Service provision.

A survey focussing on the following six key areas of enquiry was designed for children and young people and administered using Survey Monkey;

- Health and Wellbeing
- Learn and Achieve
- Good Relations
- Participation
- Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity
- Living in Safety and Stability.

The areas of enquiry were identified based on key policy directives such as the Programme for Government, the Children and Young People’s Strategy and Priorities for Youth. The areas of enquiry are also in line with existing practice areas in EA’s internal Target Monitor.

A total of 16,132 children and young people responded to the survey. Children and young people from a range of statutory, local and voluntary youth groups involved in DE funded youth work participated. Children and young people not currently involved in Youth Services were also canvassed.

A similar survey based on the same areas of enquiry was designed and distributed to youth workers and volunteers. There were 704

respondents to this survey. Youth workers and volunteers from a range of statutory, local and voluntary youth groups involved in DE funded youth work took part in the survey.

The survey responses were analysed and helped inform the assessment of need.

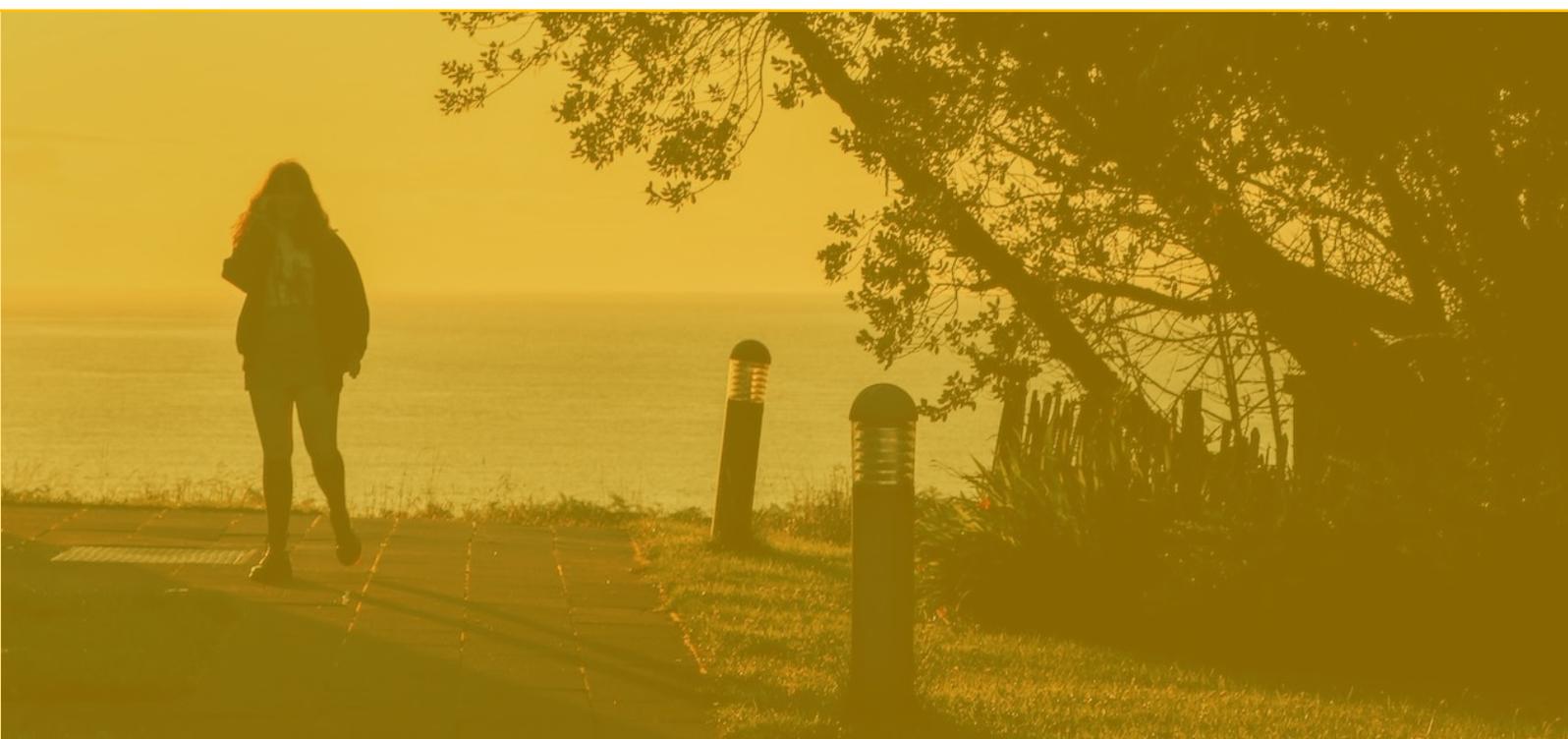
Stakeholder Engagement Events

The EA Youth Service organised a series of stakeholder engagement events examining:

- The Needs of Rural Children and Young People
- Supporting Children and Young People’s Learning
- The Emerging Needs of Children and Young People
- The Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People
- Research and Innovation
- Children and Young People and Inclusion.

These events were co-designed and delivered by young people. Key stakeholders from a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations attended and participated in these events.

The findings from these stakeholder events have also been used to inform the assessment of need.







Northern Ireland in Numbers

Northern Ireland in Numbers

- 622,985 children and young people live in Northern Ireland
 - 94,826 aged 0-3 years
 - 126,032 aged 4-8 years
 - 128,671 aged 9-13 years
 - 114,321 aged 14-18 years
 - 159,135 aged 19-25 years
- 156,992 children and young people (25.2%) live in an area of deprivation
- 214,930 children and young people (34.5%) live in a rural community
- One in five children and young people have a mental health need
- 11,485 young people identify as LGBTQ. (14-25)
- 122,392 children and young people are engaged in youth work
- 6,000 children and young people in Northern Ireland are classified as homeless
- There are more than 8,000 young carers in Northern Ireland (Average age 12)
- There are 20,000 young people aged 16-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- There are at least 3,100 Children and young people looked after
- 97,144 (29.2%) of all pupils in Northern Ireland are eligible for free school meals
- 77,965 (23%) of all pupils have a special educational need or a disability
- 15,290 newcomers attend schools in Northern Ireland
- 1,027 Traveller children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland
- 660 Roma children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.



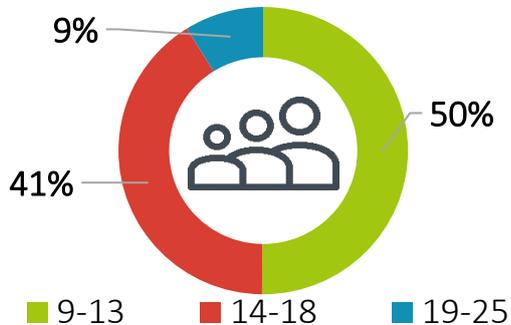


Survey Headlines

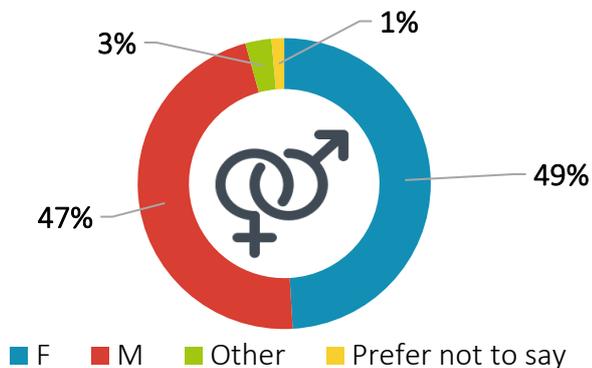
Survey of Need - Who Responded?

Young People

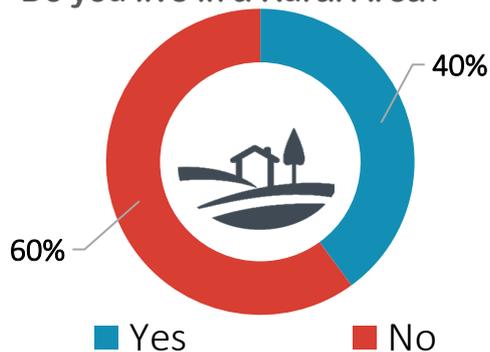
Age Category



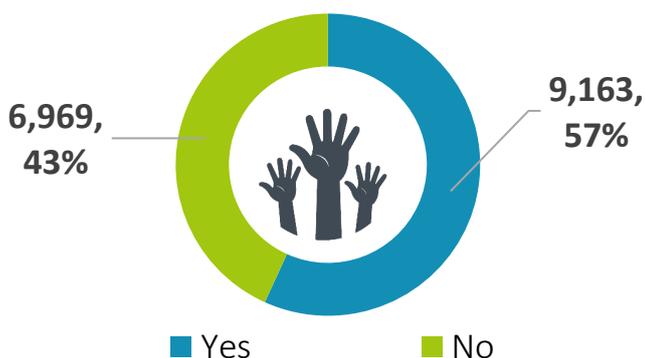
Response by Gender



Do you live in a Rural Area?

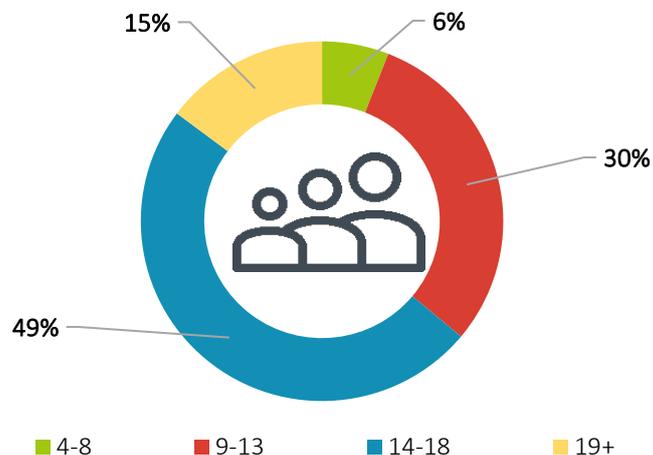


Do you currently participate in Youth Services?

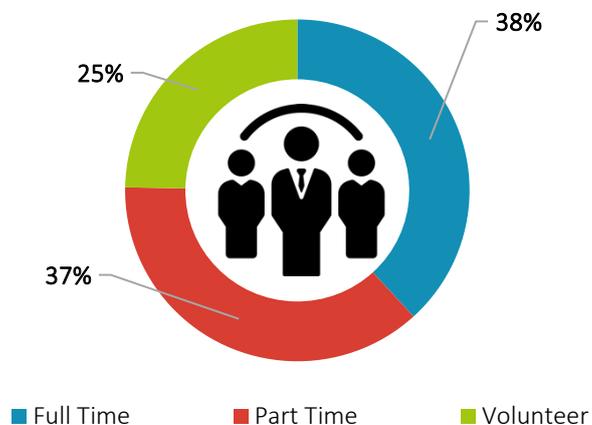


Youth Workers

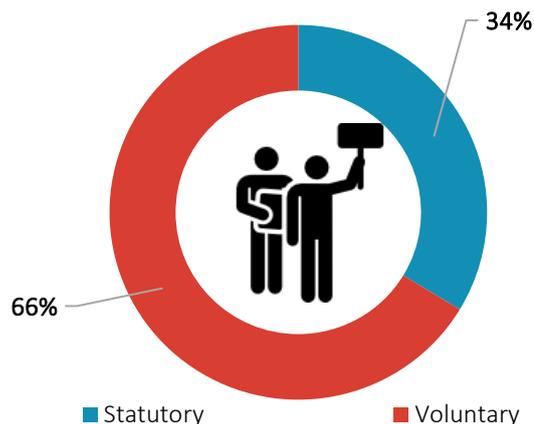
Age Category



Type of Worker

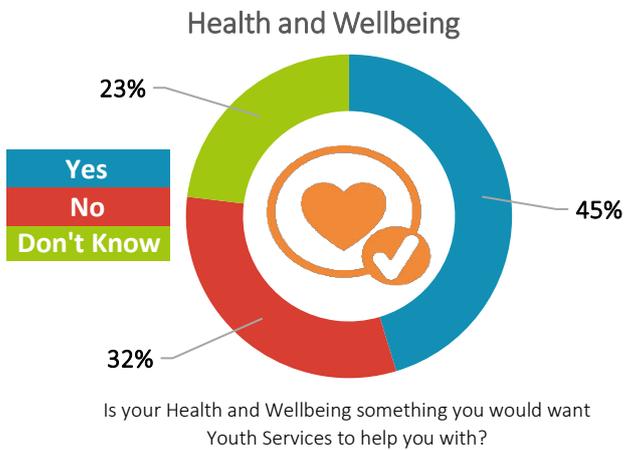


Sector

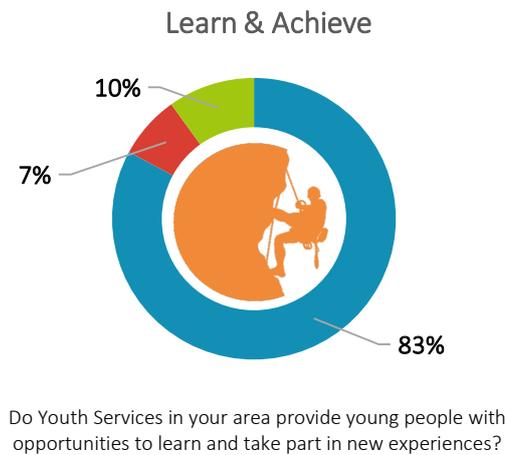
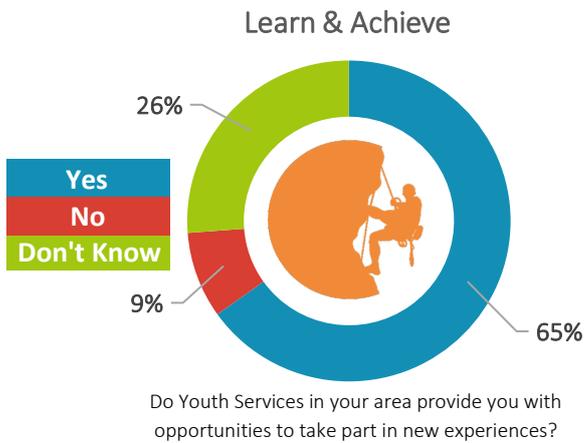
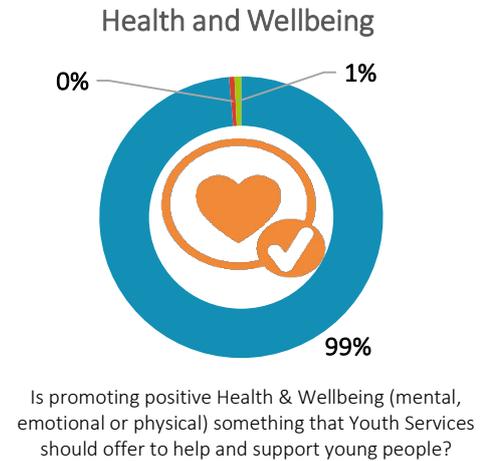


Survey of Need – Headline Findings

Young People

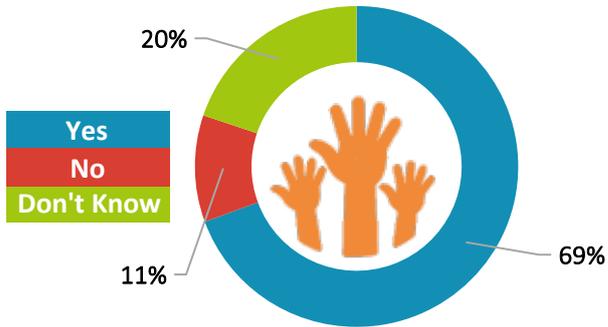


Youth Workers



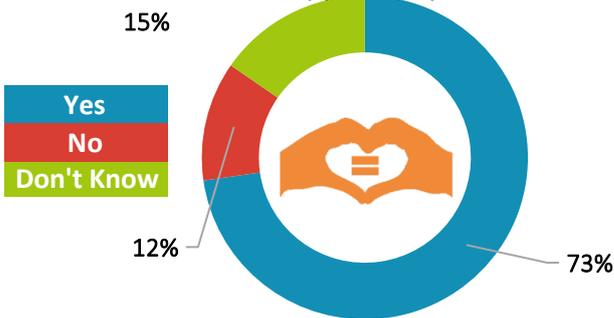
Young People

Participation



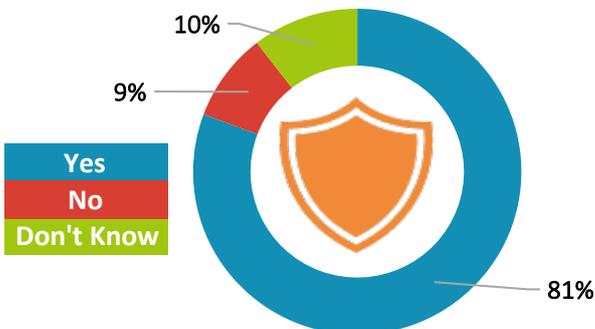
Do you have opportunity to take part in Youth Services in your Area?

Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity



I feel I have the same opportunities in life and am treated the same as other people?

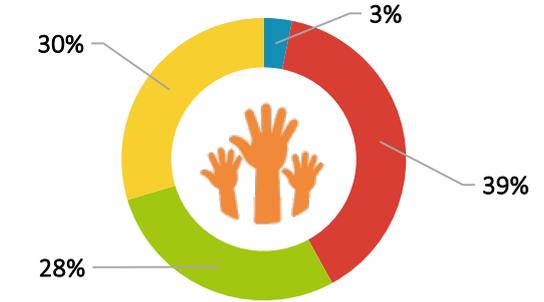
Living in Safety & Stability



I feel safe in my own community?

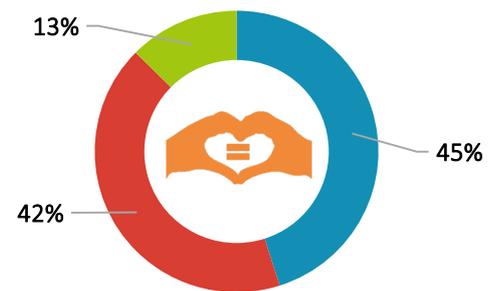
Youth Workers

Participation



Please rate how often young people in your area have opportunities to participate in Youth Services.

Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity



I feel I have the same opportunities in life and am treated the same as other people?

Living in Safety & Stability



Young People that you work with feel safe in their own community?



Health & Wellbeing

Area of Enquiry 1: Health and Wellbeing

Key Facts

- Male life expectancy in Northern Ireland is 78.5 years. In the most deprived areas, it is 74.2 years.
- Female life expectancy in Northern Ireland is 82.3 years. In the most deprived areas, it is 79.6 years.
- The standardised incidence rate for cancer in Northern Ireland is 596 per 100,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 689 per 100,000 population.
- The standardised admission rate for self-harm in Northern Ireland is 154 per 100,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 290 per 100,000 population.
- The crude suicide rate in Northern Ireland is 16.5 per 100,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 32.3 per 100,000 population.
- The standardised admission rate for drug related issues in Northern Ireland is 202.3 per 100,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 408.4 per 100,000 population.
- The standardised admission rate for alcohol related issues in Northern Ireland is 691 per 100,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 1,491 per 100,000 population.
- The teenage birth rate for Northern Ireland is 8.9 per 1,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 17.2 per 1,000 population.
- The proportion of Primary 1 pupils identified as obese or overweight is 21%. In the most deprived areas, it is 23%.
- The proportion of Year 8 pupils identified as obese or overweight is 29%. In the most deprived areas, it is 36%.

- The standardised admission rate for self-harm in Northern Ireland is 154 per 100,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 290 per 100,000 population.
- The standardised prescription rate for mood and anxiety in Northern Ireland is 213 per 1,000 population. In the most deprived areas, it is 287 per 1,000 population.
- In 2017, 30.6% of children aged 0-2 years in Northern Ireland were registered with a dentist.
- In 2017, 74.7% of children aged 3-5 years in Northern Ireland were registered with a dentist.
- The overall suicide rate in Northern Ireland is currently 3 times the rate of road deaths.
- One in five children and young people in Northern Ireland have a mental health need at any one time.
- Mental health costs in Northern Ireland are £3.5 billion – 12% of Northern Ireland national income.

Why is this measure important?

The promotion of health and wellbeing and maintaining a healthy population is the basic goal of any society. According to the World Health Organisation, enjoying better health is central to human happiness and wellbeing. It can also make a significant contribution to economic progress, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive, and enjoy a better standard of living.³

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is not just about being physically fit, it is also about being mentally and emotionally fit. Research has shown that enjoying a healthy lifestyle can improve one's physical appearance, increase one's lifespan, boost one's immunity against diseases as well as improving one's quality of life and mental and emotional health and wellbeing.⁴ Poor mental health is proven to affect children and young people's educational attainment and their ability

³ <https://www.who.int/hdp/en/>

⁴ <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/the-mental-health-benefits-of-exercise.htm>

to form positive relationships which in turn can lead to increasing isolation, their sense of happiness and threaten their future opportunities and role in the community.

According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families a child and young person's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social and environmental development and wellbeing.⁵ It has also been suggested that good health and wellbeing is central to a child and young person's effective learning and preparation for and successful transition to adult life and independent living.

Good health cannot be taken for granted. There are certain things which are essential to ensure that good health is achieved and maintained. Health experts have highlighted that a balanced and nutritious diet, along with regular exercise and adequate rest and sleep are the key factors that can contribute to one's good health and mental and emotional wellbeing.

What are the factors that can negatively impact on a child or young person's health and wellbeing?

In general, health outcomes in Northern Ireland continue to improve thanks to advancements in medical science, improved social and economic conditions and investment in the healthcare system. However, there are a range of social determinants which are responsible for significant levels of unfair health inequalities. The World Health Organisation has described these as, the

conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, age and the wider set of forces or systems shaping the conditions of their daily lives.⁶

Therefore, health inequalities are directly linked to one's social status and this may explain some of the growing inequalities that many vulnerable people and communities in Northern Ireland face in terms of their general health outcomes, their mental and emotional wellbeing and their life expectancy. In his report Fair Society, Healthy Lives, Michael Marmot stated that inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society. It was also noted that reducing these health inequalities can bring about considerable benefits to both individuals and communities.⁷

A recent study noted that inequalities in health outcomes are more likely to affect those without equal access to resources or support. It stated that children and young people living in low income households and in the most deprived communities are more likely to be obese, have lower life expectancies and are more likely to have poorer physical, mental and sexual health outcomes.⁸

Vulnerable and marginalised groups of children and young people, including children and young people looked after, those with special educational needs or a disability, those from ethnic minorities, young carers, young people identifying as LGBTQ or those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences are also more likely to have poorer health outcomes than their peers.⁹ Within Northern Ireland significant numbers of children and young people fall into these groups. Poor health outcomes are also linked to poor educational outcomes.

⁵http://www.earlyyearsmatters.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/eyfs_unique_child_health1.pdf

⁶ https://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/

⁷ www.ucl.ac.uk/marmotreview

⁸ Hagell, A et al, 2018, The Social determinants of Young People's Health, Health Foundation, London.

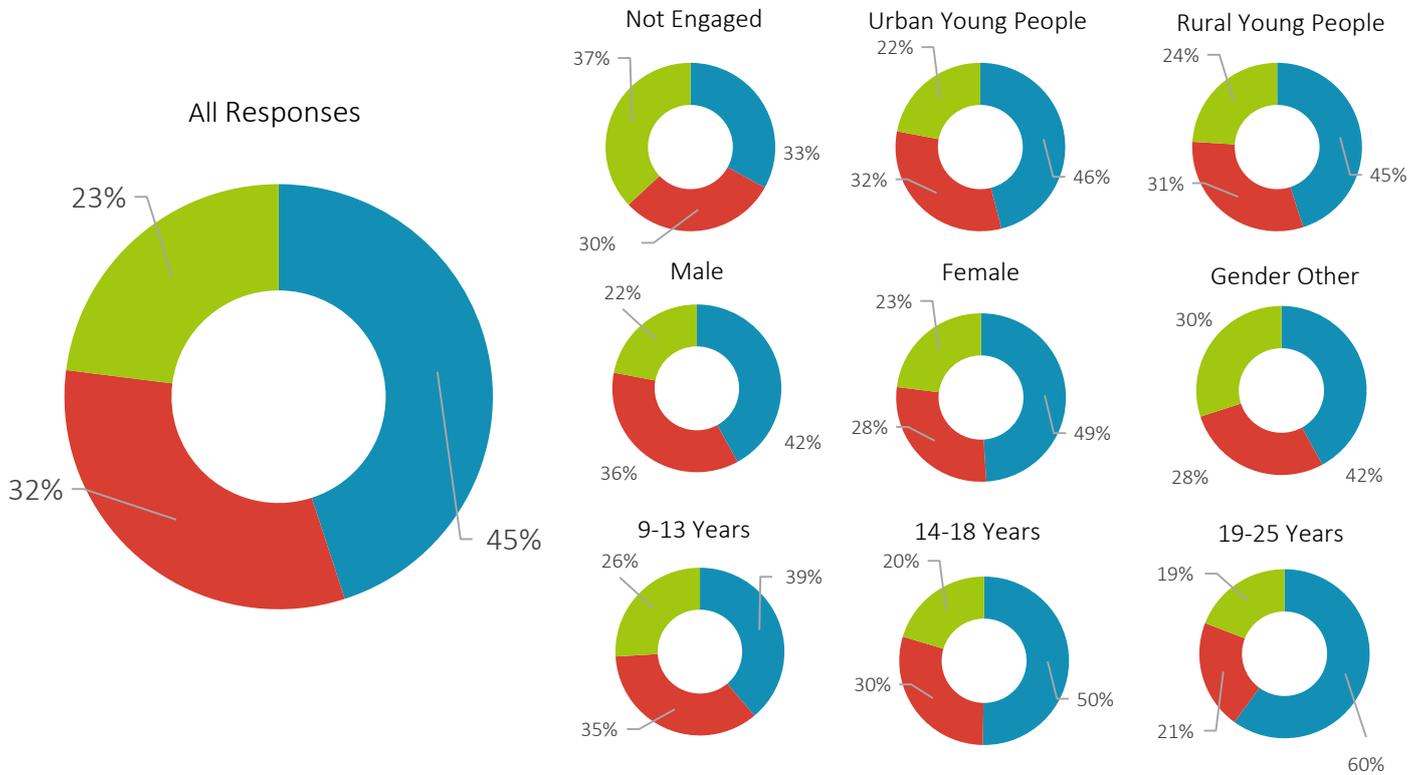
⁹ The Association of Young People's Health, 2019, Key Data on Young People 2019, AYPH, London.

Survey Findings – Health and Wellbeing

Yes No Don't Know

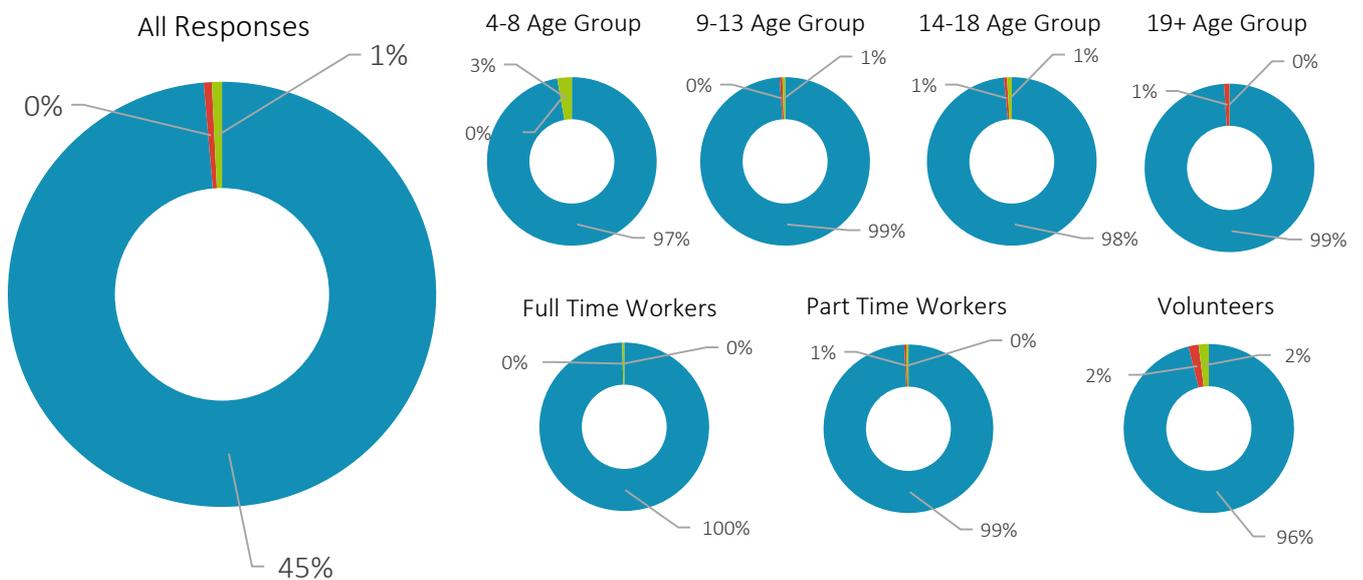
Young People

Is promoting positive Health & Wellbeing (mental, emotional or physical) something that Youth Services should offer to help and support young people?



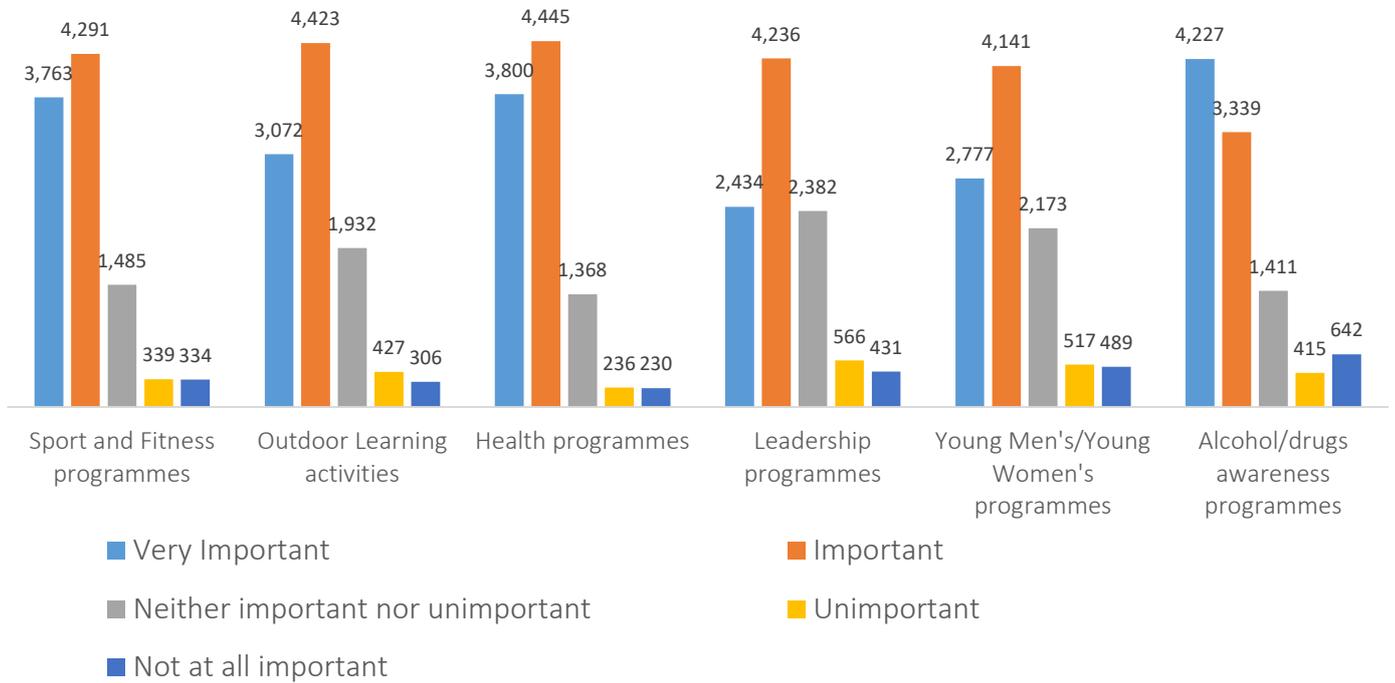
Youth Workers

Is promoting positive Health & Wellbeing (mental, emotional or physical) something that Youth Services should offer to help and support young people?



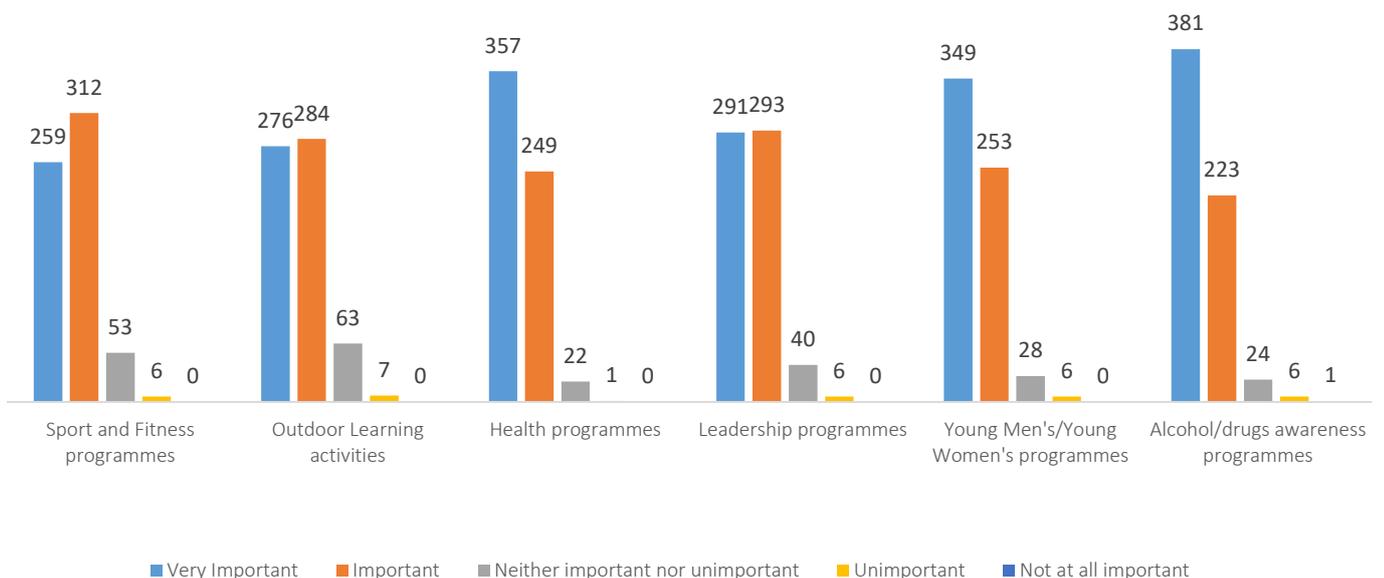
Young People

Health and Wellbeing - What activities or programmes would you like Youth Services in your area to provide to help with your Health Wellbeing?



Youth Workers

Health and Wellbeing - What activities or programmes should Youth Services in your area provide to support positive Health and Wellbeing amongst young people?



Children and Young People's Summary of Narrative Responses

- Children and young people wanted access to mental health, suicide awareness and mindfulness programmes.
- Relationships, sexual health and awareness programmes were also important to children and young people.
- Children and young people talked about early intervention, the importance of youth clubs and the value of talking and listening.
- The consequences of taking drugs and alcohol was a clear message from children and young people. They were keen to participate in health based programmes exploring these issues.
- Art, drama and creative arts programmes were put forward as potential areas for support.
- Children and young people also identified the importance of their voices being heard in the development of programmes to support the health concerns they had.

*Projects that put young people in the lead. Projects that are not tokenistic and are genuinely youth led. Community based youth support projects can empower young people and change communities for the better. EA should consult with groups delivering programmes in this way and learn from their practice, ethos and approach. **Young Person***

Youth Workers' Summary of Narrative Responses

- Youth workers and volunteers were keen for the statutory youth sector to work in partnership with the voluntary and community sectors in designing and delivering appropriate health based programmes.
- Children and young people's mental and emotional health were key concerns identified by youth workers and volunteers and they wanted to develop programmes of support that were accessible and relevant.
- Social media, resilience, sexual health and relationships were also highlighted as ongoing issues for children and young people.
- It was also suggested that generic youth work and early intervention were important when addressing these issues.
- Sexual health and health and fitness projects should be encouraged ensuring children and young people were less dependent on their mobile phones and internet.

Peripatetic support services, crisis interventions, therapeutic services, counselling for Youth Service members and mindfulness programmes.

Youth Worker

Discussion

Increasingly the health and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people in Northern Ireland need to be considered in their broadest sense, emphasising mental and social health, as well as physical aspects of health. Young people participating at a series of stakeholder engagement events hosted by EA Youth Service recognised that the issues affecting their health and wellbeing were complex and multi-faceted. It is surprising therefore that less than half of all respondents to the survey (45%) stated that they would want Youth Services to help them with their health and wellbeing. For those not engaged in Youth Services the figure was 33%.

However, as children and young people grow older, they appear to become more aware that health and wellbeing is an important aspect of their lives. For the children aged 9-13 only 39% stated this was something Youth Services could help them with, however, 50% of 14-18 year olds and 60% of 19-25 year olds noted that Youth Services could support their health and wellbeing needs. The overwhelming majority of youth workers and volunteers (99%) suggested that Youth Services should be promoting positive health and wellbeing to support children and young people.

Physical activity is a normal part of growing up for children and young people and plays a key part in their physical, social and emotional development. A physically active lifestyle also has direct and indirect health benefits, especially for children and young people, by preventing obesity, reducing the risk of disease, promoting good mental health and resilience and establishing healthy lifestyles that may be continued into adulthood. Government guidelines recommend that children and young people should engage in at least one hour of physical activity every day. Sport and fitness

programmes and outdoor learning activities registered highly with all respondents to the survey, particularly those aged 9-13, illustrating that children and young people understand the importance of an active lifestyle to their overall general health and wellbeing.

An affordable healthy diet is also essential for good health, however, many families in Northern Ireland struggle to buy and eat enough fruit, vegetables or other healthy foods to meet official nutrition guidelines. A recent poverty report found that the poorest families are unable to meet the government's healthy food requirements.¹⁰ A report by the Children's Society noted that children and young people living in poverty are 5.5 times more likely to go hungry than their peers.¹¹ This can lead to poor health and education outcomes as well as exposing vulnerable children and young people to bullying which can negatively impact on their emotional and mental health. At the same time, childhood obesity levels in Northern Ireland continue to rise, and this trend is most prevalent in deprived communities. This can also have a negative impact on a child or young person's general health and wellbeing, now and in the future.

Children and young people who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop diabetes or heart disease in later life and be obese in adulthood. However, their physical health is not the only concern, overweight children and young people are more likely to encounter bullying, embarrassment when participating in games or sport and experience difficulty in being active. This in turn can be a contributory factor to low self-esteem and poor mental health. At a consultation event young people recognised that body image was associated with physical and mental health issues and could impact on their confidence and self-worth. Many children and young people also

¹⁰ Scott, C., Sutherland, J. & Taylor, A. (2018), Affordability of the UK's Eatwell Guide, The Food Foundation, London.

¹¹ <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/press-release/report-echoes-hunger-brutal-reality-families-children>

highlighted the role that social media played in portraying the 'perfect body' which impacted negatively on children and young people, especially girls. Children and young people also reported that they were keen to participate in programmes dealing with internet safety and cyber bullying.

At a recent stakeholder engagement event young people recognised that there were a range of contributory factors that can lead to poor diet and nutrition, such as family circumstances, parental working arrangements, the level of family income and the lack of skills in the preparation and cooking of food.

Mental illness is the single largest cause of ill health and disability in Northern Ireland. One in five children and young people will have a mental health need at any one time and their symptoms of a mental illness are distinct from those of adults.¹² According to the World Health Organisation, poor mental health manifests itself in many ways among children and young people, including, anxiety, self-harm, bipolar disorders, body image and suicidal thoughts.

Children and young people with mental health problems are more likely to engage in risk taking activity and alcohol and drug misuse. Among the determinants of poor mental health include socio-economic pressures, gender discrimination, social isolation, an unhealthy lifestyle, bullying and the risk of violence.¹³ It is interesting to note that access to health programmes was the most important support that children and young people wanted Youth Services to provide. It should also be recognised that the older age groups (14-18 and

19-25) placed greater emphasis on accessing drug and alcohol programmes which are clearly linked to mental health issues. Youth workers and volunteers indicated that the most beneficial programmes for children and young people in terms of their health and wellbeing were health programmes and drug and alcohol programmes.

The most common mental health problem affecting children and young people is severe and persistent behavioural problems.¹⁴ Children and young people from low-income families are four times more likely to experience mental health issues than those from higher income families.¹⁵ Young people from the LGBTQ community are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and are three times more likely to have made a suicide attempt at some point.¹⁶ Other vulnerable groups such as young carers, children and young people looked after, young parents and NEET young people also display disproportionately higher levels of poor mental health.¹⁷ Research undertaken by EA reported that children and young people from rural areas faced issues around social isolation and had limited opportunities to participate in Youth Services or other recreational activities, which had a detrimental impact on their mental health. Older young people wanted access to young men's and young women's programmes to meet their particular needs.

I have chosen to be happy because it is good for my health. Voltaire

¹² Betts, J. & Thompson, J. (2017), Mental Health in Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast.

¹³ <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

¹⁴ Green, H. et al. (2005) The mental health of children and young people in Great Britain 2004, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

¹⁵ Morrison Gutman, L., Joshi, H., Parsonage, M. & Schoon, I. (2015) Children of the new century: mental health

findings from the Millenium Cohort Study, London, Centre for Mental Health.

¹⁶ Statham, H., Jaclva, V. & Daly, I. (2012), The School Report: The experiences of gay young people in Britain's schools in 2012, London, Stonewall.

¹⁷

https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-09/CentreforMentalHealth_ChildrenYoungPeople_Factsheet.pdf



Learn & Achieve

Area of Enquiry 2: Learn & Achieve

Key Facts

- In 2017/2018, 71.8% of year 12 pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths. 51.6% of pupils entitled to free school meals achieved this indicator.
- In 2017/2018, 76.5% of female year 12 pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent including English and Maths compared to 67.1% of male year 12 pupils.
- In 2017/2018, 70.2% of year 14 pupils achieved 3 or more A Levels at grades A*-C or equivalent. 51.5% of pupils entitled to free school meals achieved this indicator.
- In 2017/2018, 72.8% of female year 14 pupils achieved 3 or more A Levels at grades A*-C or equivalent compared to 67% of male year 14 pupils.
- 77,965 pupils (23%) in Northern Ireland have a special educational need.
- 97,144 pupils (29.2%) in Northern Ireland are eligible for free school meals.
- 15,290 pupils (4.7%) in Northern Ireland are newcomers.
- From April - June 2019 there were 20,000 NEET young people (aged 16-24) in Northern Ireland. This represents 10.2% of all young people aged 16-24.

Why is this measure important?

Education is not just about being able to read, write and count. Education is key to one's personal and professional success and provides various types of knowledge and skills. Education is also a

basic human right and is a significant factor in the development of children and young people, communities and nations. According to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) education is the clearest indicator of life outcomes such as employment, income and social status and is a strong predictor of attitudes and wellbeing.¹⁸

Education can have a transformational impact on the lives of children and young people. Education is a positive factor in ensuring that children and young people thrive, learn and achieve allowing them to enjoy a prosperous and rewarding life. It is also a means of breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation and a powerful way of stopping them from engaging in risk taking activities, crime or anti-social behaviour. As a society, we aspire for every child and young person to learn and achieve and reach his or her potential to become an active citizen. Acquiring a worthwhile education can make this a reality.

Recent research from Australia noted that education is important for children and young people as it helps achieve academic growth, increases access to opportunities, develops positive attitudes about themselves and their learning and heightens aspirations and interests to support their career pathways. The report suggested that a combination of these factors supports children and young people to make positive decisions about their future and allows them to reach their potential.¹⁹

Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today. Malcolm X.

¹⁸ Economic and Social Research Council, 2014, The Wellbeing Effect of Education, [https://esrc.ukri.org/files/news-events-and-](https://esrc.ukri.org/files/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/the-wellbeing-effect-of-education/)

[publications/evidence-briefings/the-wellbeing-effect-of-education/](https://esrc.ukri.org/files/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/the-wellbeing-effect-of-education/)

¹⁹ <https://www.teachforaustralia.org/2017/04/02/the-cycle-of-disadvantage/>

What are the factors that can negatively impact on a child or young person's ability to learn and achieve?

Educational attainment in Northern Ireland has increased among all children and young people over the last number of years, however, there remains a tail of underachievement which is prevalent among vulnerable groups; this includes those living in deprived areas, having a special educational need or disability, being a child or young person looked after, being a newcomer, being a young carer, coming from the Travelling Community or another minority group and being from a Section 75 group. This list is not exhaustive, however, failure to address the gap in educational attainment from these groups will ensure that vulnerable children and young people will continue to face a future with limited opportunities and greater social and economic challenges.

The attainment gap has persisted despite a series of intervention programmes and additional investment. A recent report from England noted that these inequalities manifest themselves in later life outcomes. Vulnerable children and young people are less likely to continue into post-compulsory education, have lower average earnings, poorer health and a greater chance of becoming involved in crime and anti-social

behaviour than their peers. The report argued that allowing a significant number of children and young people to fail to reach their educational and economic potential is a waste of human capital.²⁰

Within Northern Ireland, the majority of children and young people achieve and succeed at school. However, there are significant groups of vulnerable children and young people who are at risk of failing to fulfil their potential either as a result of their social context, an educational need or their experiences and attitudes towards the formal education system. There is no universal definition of what being vulnerable throughout childhood is, however it can be based on a combination of circumstances where one is at risk of not achieving positive life outcomes. In many cases, these vulnerable children and young people face a variety of difficulties and challenges adapting to the formal curriculum and require an education that can meet their particular needs. Educational disadvantage has become a reality faced by many children and young people living in Northern Ireland.

The main hope of a nation lies in the proper education of its youth. Erasmus

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Nelson Mandela.

²⁰ Andrews, J., Robinson, D. & Hutchinson, J., (2017), Closing the Gap – Trends in Educational Attainment and Disadvantage, Education Policy Institute, London.

Survey Findings – Learn & Achieve

Yes No Don't Know

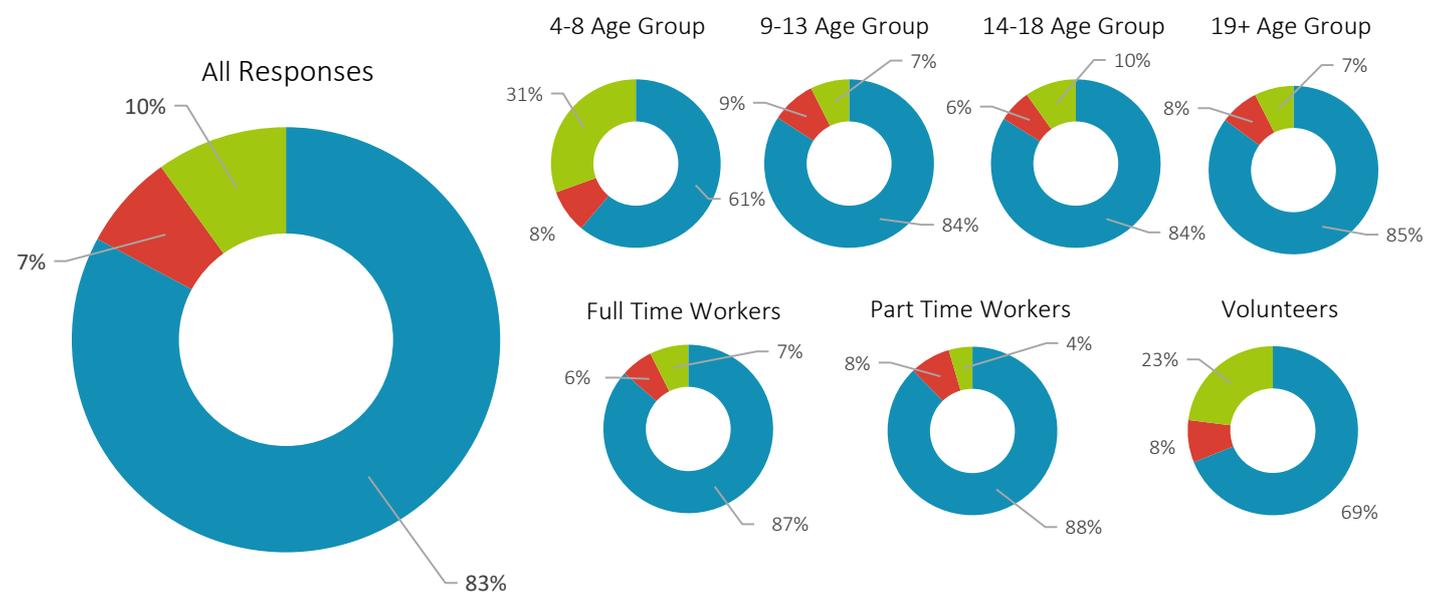
Young People

Do Youth Services in your area provide young people with opportunities to learn and take part in new experiences?



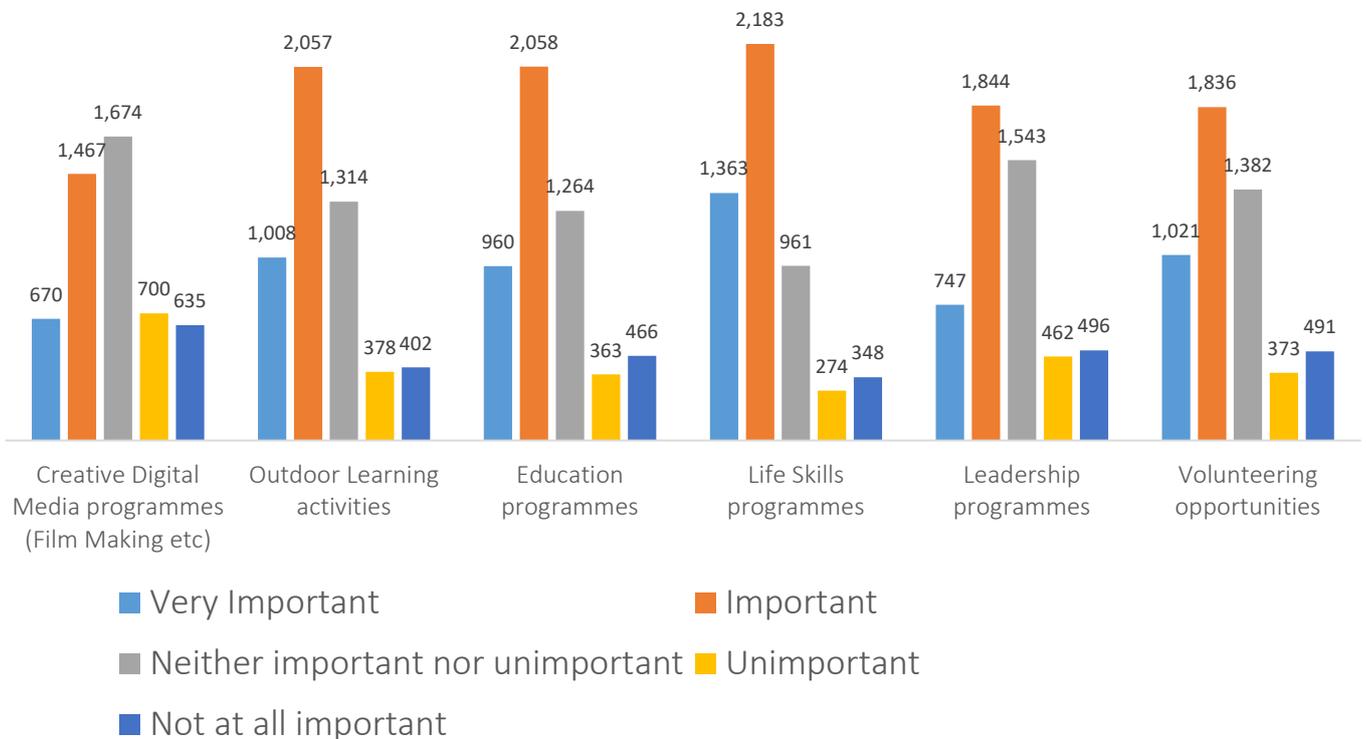
Youth Workers

Do Youth Services in your area provide young people with opportunities to learn and take part in new experiences?



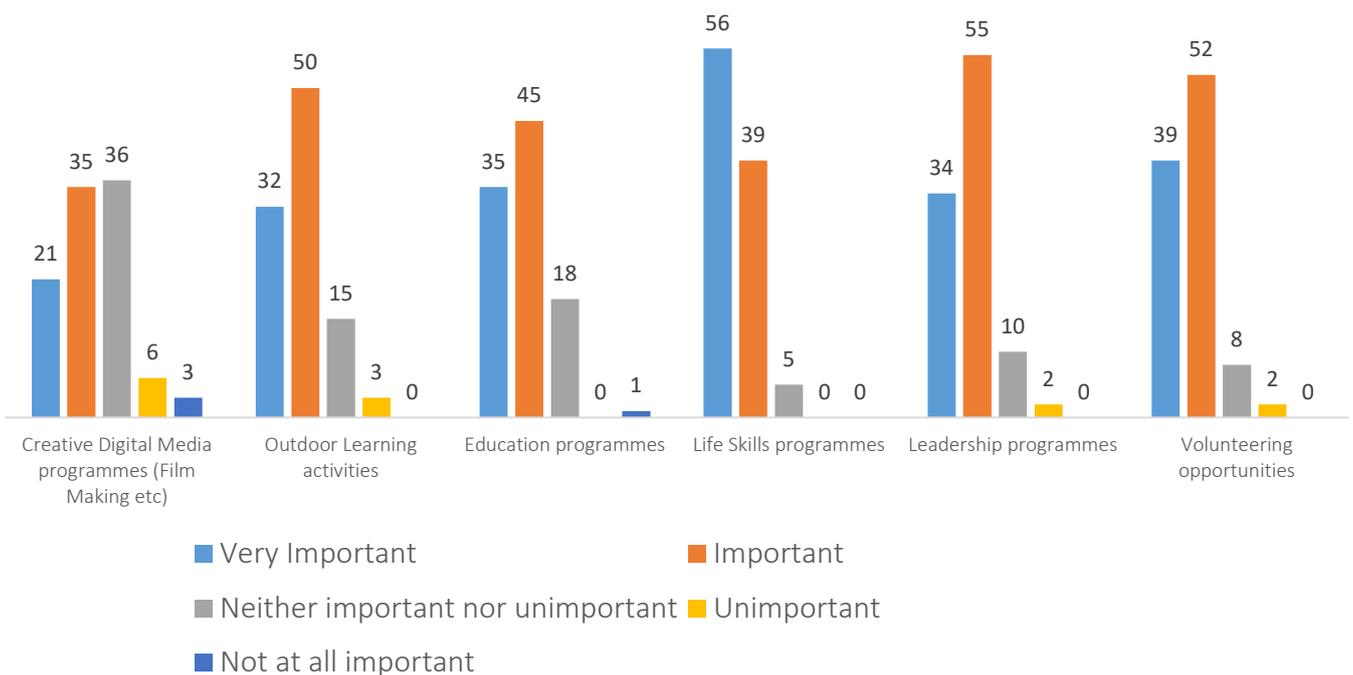
Young People

Learn & Achieve - What opportunities would you like Youth Services in your area to provide to help you learn and achieve?



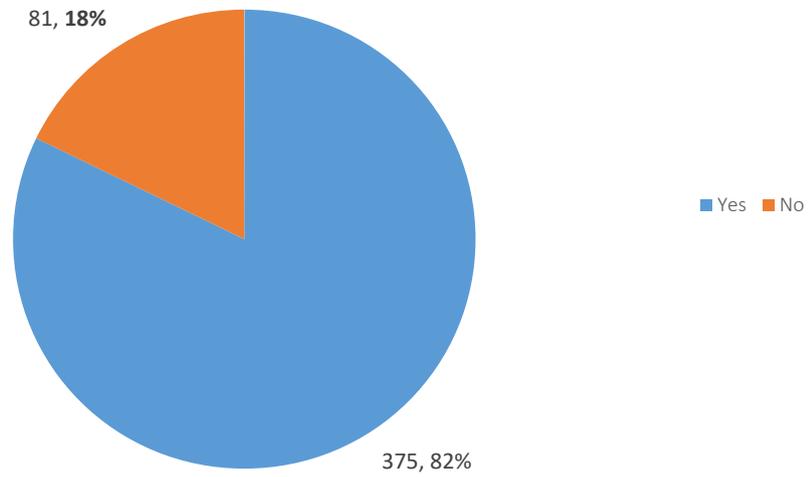
Youth Workers

Learn & Achieve - What opportunities should Youth Services in your area provide to help young people learn and achieve?



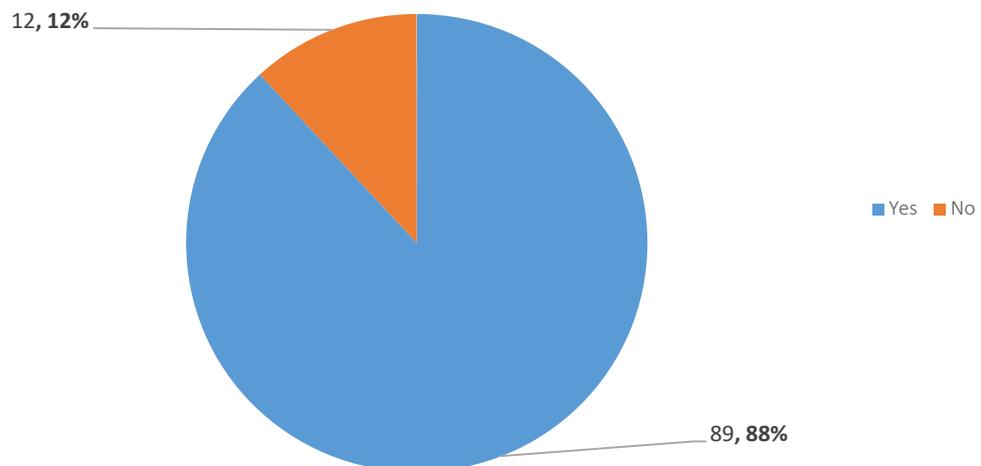
Young People

Learn & Achieve - I would like these programmes to be accredited?



Youth Workers

Learn & Achieve - Do you think these programmes should be accredited?



Children and Young People's Summary of Narrative Responses

- Children and young people recognised that they needed additional support to help them develop their employability skills, communication skills and prepare them for adulthood and the world of work.
- Non-formal education programmes, delivered by Youth Services, were proposed to support those struggling with the formal curriculum.
- There was an increasing focus on programmes of art, music, drama, creative arts and home economics being delivered in a youth work setting.
- Children and young people also wanted education programmes delivered to support their mental health and resilience.
- They also requested more support for the LGBTQ community as well as other vulnerable groups.

More programmes available after school rather than the evening time, as I have a lot of homework and it would be easier to get a lift home.

Young Person

Youth Workers' Summary of Narrative Responses

- Children and young people should be provided with opportunities that prepare them for the world of work. Youth workers suggested greater access to employability and vocational programmes and more opportunities to volunteer and take on leadership roles.
- Early intervention, building relationships with others and youth club availability were key to supporting children and young people in the long term.
- Availability to social action, active learning, outdoor learning and citizenship opportunities were important issues highlighted by youth workers and volunteers.
- They also saw the importance of developing programmes around climate issues, the environment and recycling.

Young people also need to be supported to become young leaders through public speaking skills, exploring local democracy and getting involved in the council's new community planning processes.

Youth Worker



Discussion

Education is a gateway for social mobility and breaking the cycle of poverty. Yet for many children and young people from deprived communities and other vulnerable groups, our education system fails to meet their needs. The Centre for Social Justice noted that in order to tackle educational failure, our best schools should be in our poorest communities.²¹

However, at a recent stakeholder event young people stated that the formal education system does not always meet or is responsive to their needs and learning styles. They also identified a number of barriers to their learning and achieving, including the school environment, exam stress, and a lack of support from teachers. Children and young people also reflected that programmes delivered by Youth Services encouraged learning and these were interactive, engaging and interesting. It is clear from the survey and ongoing internal research that certain groups of children and young people learn and achieve better outcomes in a youth work setting, where they feel more supported and youth workers understand them and how they learn best.

Despite pro-active interventions in recent years from a range of bodies, including Government departments, inequalities in the Northern Ireland education system persist and have failed significant numbers of children and young people who are most in need of support and guidance. These vulnerable children and young people are unlikely to fulfil their potential, either as a result of their educational, home or community environment or, in many cases a failure to adapt to the prescribed formal curriculum which fails to motivate or support them.

Failure to provide appropriate opportunities for these children and young people will limit their career opportunities and lead to future social and

economic isolation. Almost two-thirds of survey respondents (65%) reported that they wanted Youth Services to provide them with opportunities to learn and take part in new experiences. However, for those not engaged in Youth Services this figure was significantly lower, 45%, and for those identifying as gender other it was 54%. The majority of youth workers and volunteers noted that Youth Services should provide new opportunities for children and young people to learn and take part in new experiences.

There is a clear social dimension to educational underachievement. Statistics from DE reveal that children and young people in receipt of free school meals are more than twice as likely to leave school without any substantive qualifications. There is also a significant attainment gap between children and young people with a special educational need or a disability and their peers. Other children and young people from Section 75 groups such as young carers, children and young people looked after, newcomers, children and young people from Traveller and Roma Communities or other minority ethnic groups experience similar educational disadvantage.

In effect, a significant number of children and young people are being left behind. Consequently, it is interesting to note that the vast majority of respondents (72%) were keen to participate in programmes delivered by Youth Services that provided them with a qualification or an accreditation of some kind. This corresponds with findings from a recent engagement event where young people wanted Youth Services to provide qualifications that were accessible, meaningful and would meet their career and life opportunities. Youth workers and volunteers also agreed (88%) that programmes with accreditation offered greater value and were more practical for children and young people in the long term.

²¹

<https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/policy/breakthrough-britain/education-failure>

The consequences of leaving school with limited qualifications can have a detrimental impact on a young person's immediate and long term life chances. Many of these vulnerable young people will be unable to begin apprenticeships, start technical or vocational courses or enter the workplace as they cannot meet the basic entry requirements. In many cases, they are unable to complete basic application forms. Young people leaving school without qualifications will be categorised as NEET. The numbers of NEET young people has increased significantly in the last number of years.

It is interesting to report that children and young people from all age groups stated that life skills programmes were the most important in terms of them successfully transitioning into adulthood and the world of work. Understandably, those aged 19-25 placed greater emphasis on the importance of life skills programmes. Volunteering opportunities and educational programmes also ranked highly among all children and young people. Life-skills programmes, leadership programmes and volunteering opportunities were the most common programmes put forward by youth workers and volunteers to help children and young people learn and achieve and make the transition into the world of work.

Educational underachievement can have a negative impact on a child or young person's life chances and opportunities. They are less likely to enter and progress in the workplace which will reduce their opportunities for future social and economic participation in wider society. A New Zealand report noted other negative outcomes such as involvement in juvenile crime, drug and alcohol misuse leading to other risk taking activity and a dependency on welfare.²²

Youth Services are ideally placed to contribute to the reduction of barriers for children and young people learning and achieving and can potentially increase educational attainment among the most vulnerable children and young people and particularly those from minority groups. Not all children and young people learn in the same way and informal learning methodologies appeal to those who are failing in the formal education environment.

It should be noted that although creative, digital and media programmes were the least popular choice for children and young people, these new, innovative programmes have the potential to provide valuable pathways for children and young people in the future.



²² Fergusson, D. M., Swain-Campbell, N. R. & Horwood, L. J., (2002), Outcomes of leaving school without formal

educational qualifications. New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, Christchurch.





Good Relations

Area of Enquiry 3: Good Relations

Key Facts

- There was a total of 2,456 incidences of hate crime recorded in Northern Ireland between April 2018 and March 2019.
 - Racist incidences 1,095
 - Homophobic incidences 287
 - Sectarian incidences 891
 - Disability incidences 97
 - Faith/Religion incidences 46
 - Transphobic incidences 40
- There are 18 interface areas in Northern Ireland.
 - 10 in Belfast
 - 5 in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon
 - 3 in Derry and Strabane
- 15,290 newcomer children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- 77,965 children and young people have a special educational need or a disability.
- According to the Office of National Statistics, 4.2% of young people in the UK aged 16-24 identify as either lesbian, gay or bisexual. In Northern Ireland this equates to approximately 11,500 young people.
- 1,027 Traveller children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- 660 Roma children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- The 2011 census recorded that at least 81,000 people were born outside Northern Ireland.
- The 2011 census recorded that at least 50,000 people in Northern Ireland speak a language other than English as their first language.
- In 2018/19 4,175 children and young people participated in 123 T:BUC camps programmes.

Why is this measure important?

Good relations is said to exist where there is a high level of dignity, respect and mutual understanding and an absence of prejudice, hatred, hostility or harassment.²³ In Northern Ireland, good relations is about promoting better relationships between people from different political, religious and racial backgrounds, tackling sectarianism and racism and promoting cultural diversity and inclusion. Good relations seeks to promote mutual understanding, positive cross-community relations and respect for cultural traditions.

The Northern Ireland Executive 2013 Good Relations strategy, Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) sets out a range of actions and commitments for government departments, communities and individuals who will work together to build a united community and achieve change against four key strategic priorities: Our Children and Young People; Our Shared Community; Our Safe Community; and Our Cultural Expression. This strategy is designed to ensure that the development of positive relationships and structures that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of our society will promote respect, equity and allow citizens to embrace all forms of diversity.

The Good Relations strategy in Northern Ireland is about instilling the values of fairness, equality and respect and improving the quality of life for everyone who lives here.

We are all equal in the fact that we are different. We are all the same in the fact that we will never be the same. We are united by the reality that all colours and all cultures are distinct and individual.

C. Joybell C

²³ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

What are the factors that can negatively impact on good relations in Northern Ireland?

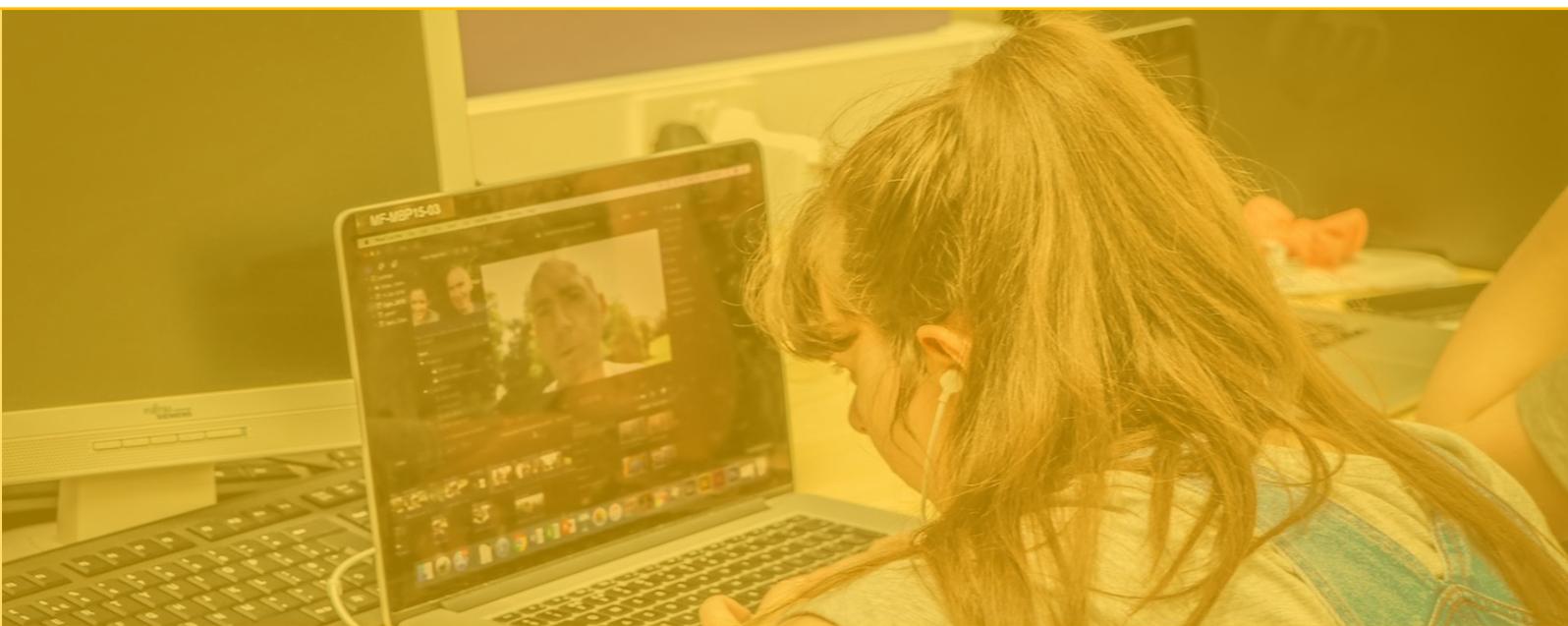
Following years of conflict, Northern Ireland has made great strides towards maintaining a peaceful society. Despite this, there are still a number of factors which ensure that community tensions, polarisation and segregation remain. Politics in Northern Ireland are polarised and many people in Northern Ireland experience some forms of residential, educational, environmental and social segregation.

Where children and young people grow up impacts on their education, who they socialise with and their friendship groups. There are still many single identity areas in Northern Ireland which encounter legacy issues and experience sectarianism. A recent report noted that sectarianism is more widespread in working class areas.²⁴ These areas, often characterised by social housing and communities affected by division suffer poverty and deprivation, lack political and community leadership, have limited aspirations and opportunities and have few opportunities to mix with children and young people from other backgrounds. These areas have also been negatively affected by austerity and welfare

reform and this economic uncertainty can lead to intolerance, crime and social unrest.

Northern Ireland also has significant numbers of interface areas where inter-community tensions exist. These areas often have weak community infrastructure and children and young people growing up in these areas are more likely to have lower educational attainment, poor career opportunities and engage in anti-social behaviour. Paramilitary attacks are on the increase and growing numbers of children and young people are being punished and recruited. Many rural areas also demonstrate separate living patterns, although these are not formally recognised as interface areas.

Northern Ireland now has a much more diverse population. There are growing numbers living here who were born outside Northern Ireland, growing numbers of young people identifying as LGBTQ, and children and young people from other marginalised or Section 75 groups who are subject to bullying, racism and intolerance.



²⁴ Sectarianism in Northern Ireland – a Review.
https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/410

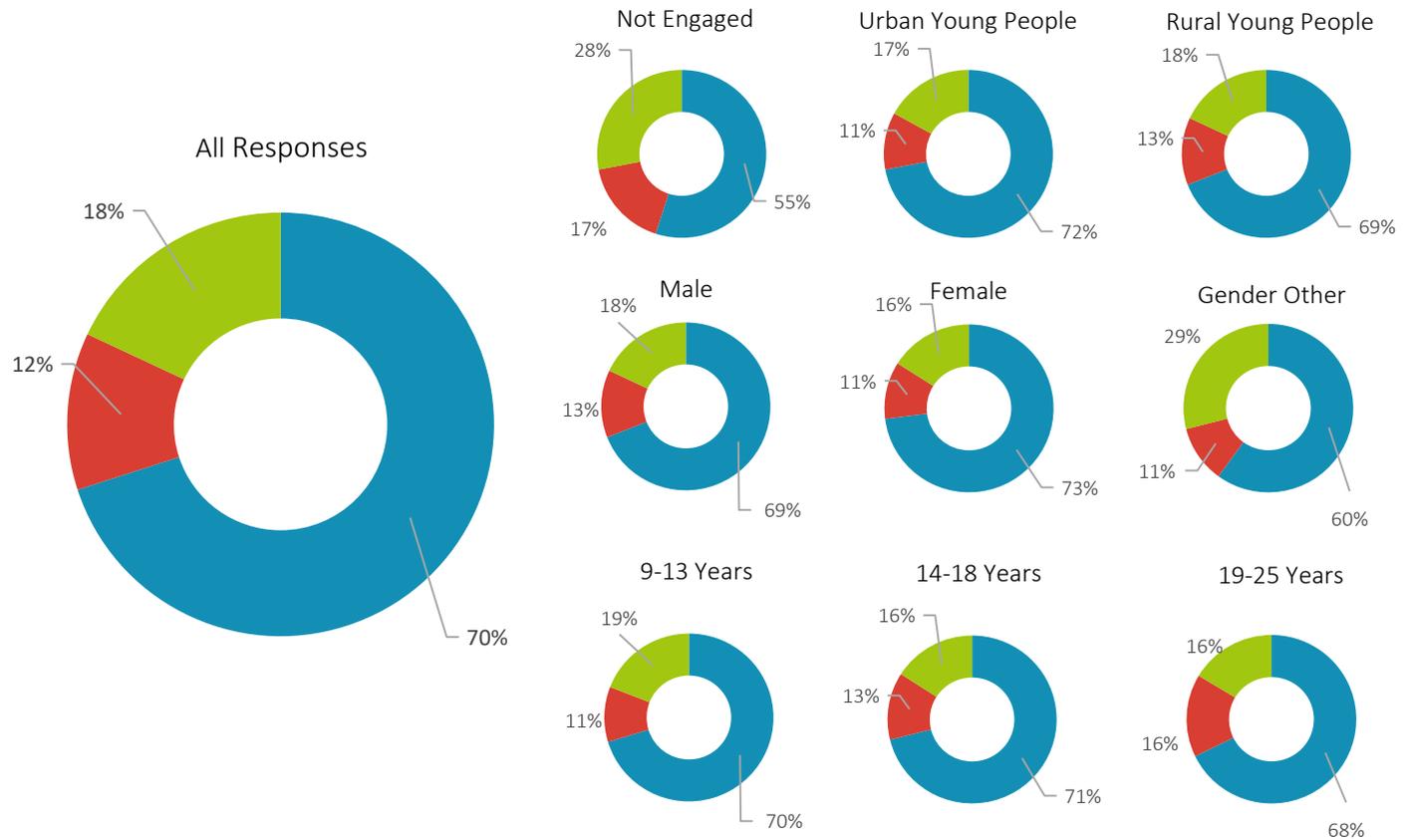
[227/A-Review-Addressing-Sectarianism-in-Northern-Ireland_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/410)

Survey Findings – Good Relations

Yes No Don't Know

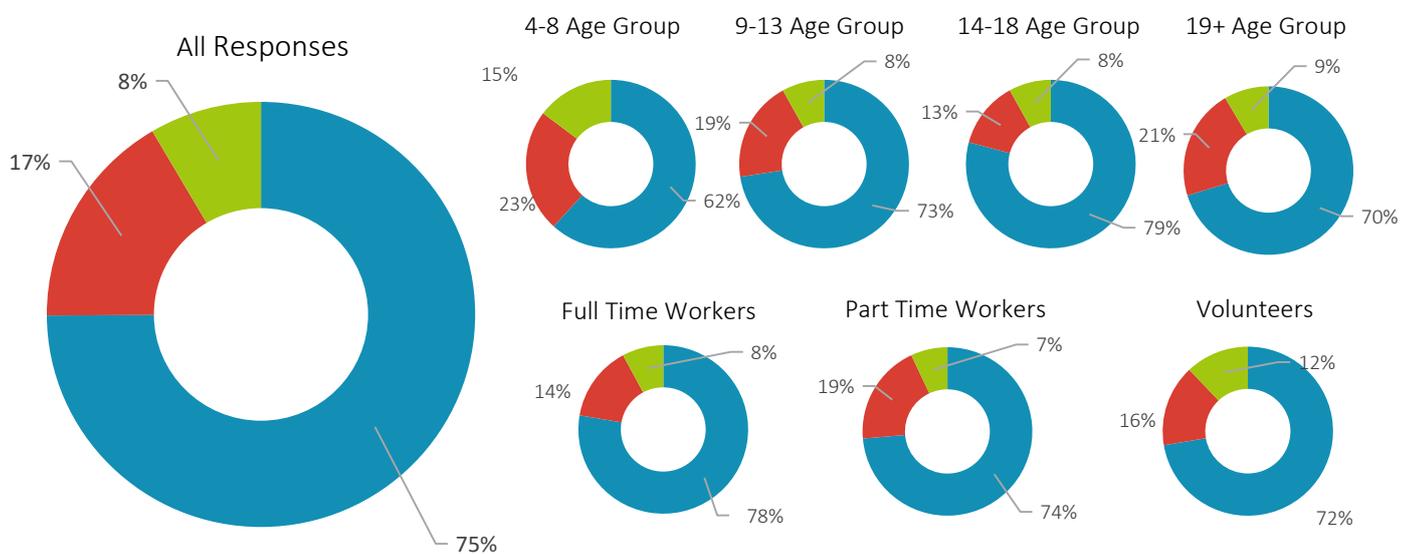
Young People

Do young people have opportunities to meet, learn and socialise with people from different backgrounds in your area?



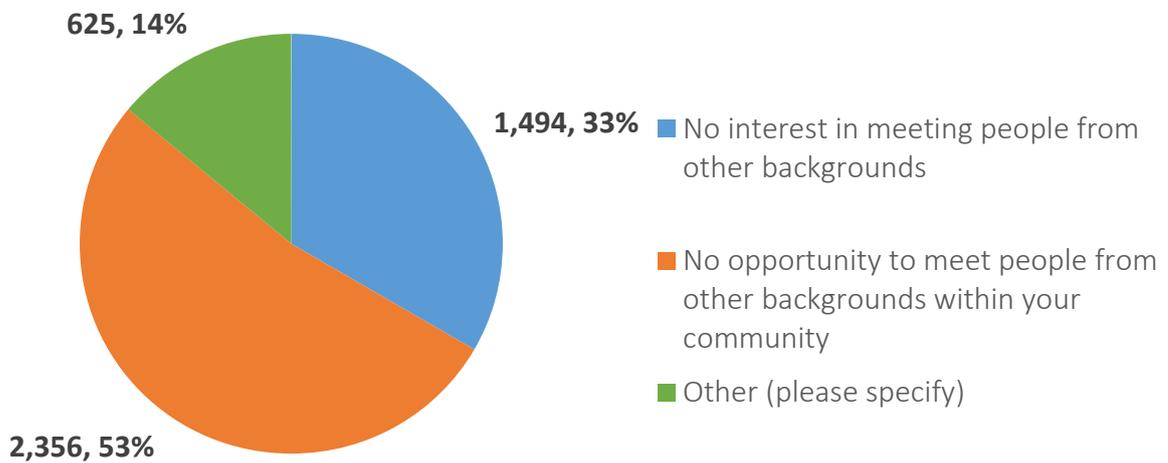
Youth Workers

Do young people have opportunities to meet, learn and socialise with people from different backgrounds in your area?



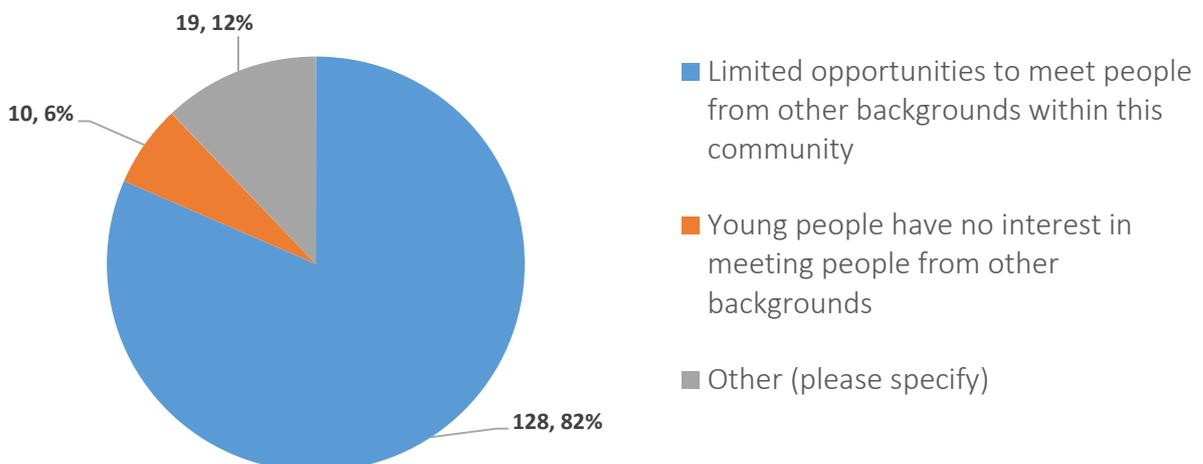
Young People

Good Relations - Reason you believe why you do not have these opportunities?



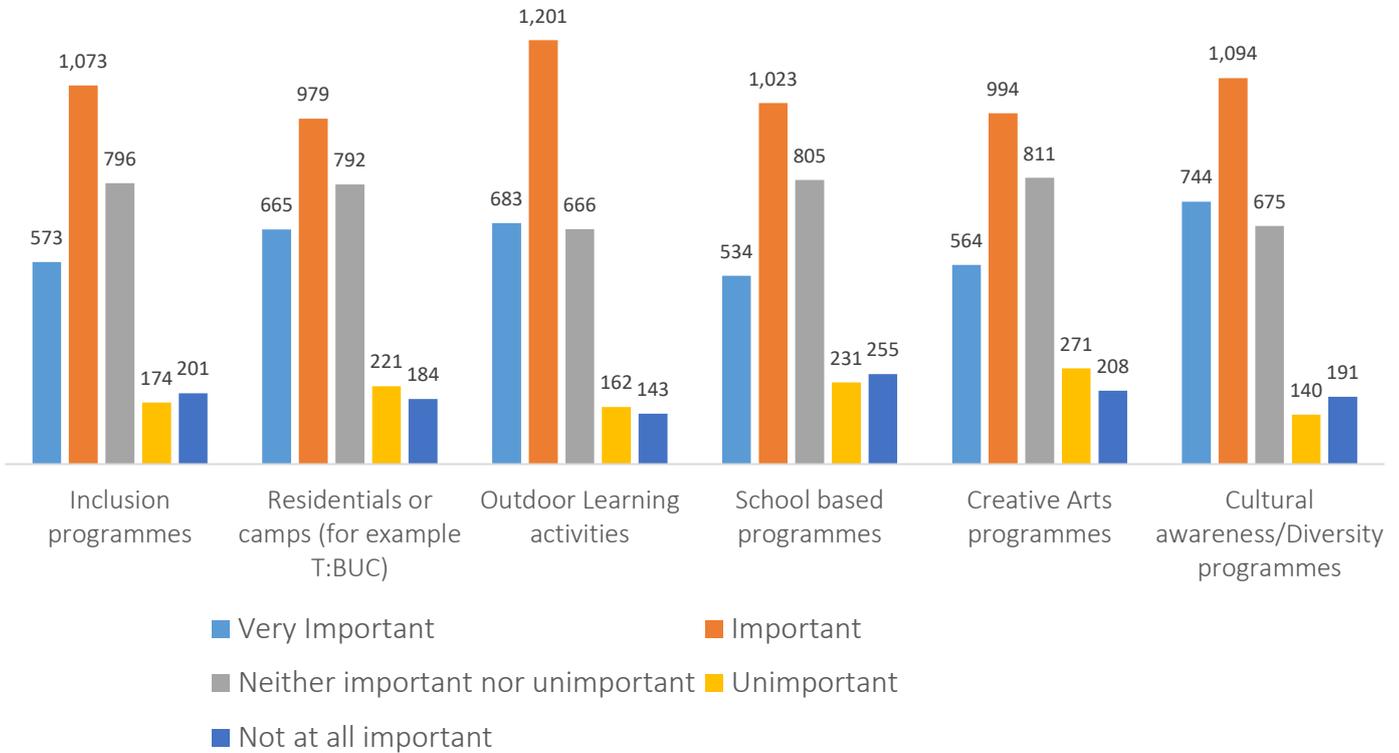
Youth Workers

Good Relations - Reason you believe why Young People do not have these opportunities?



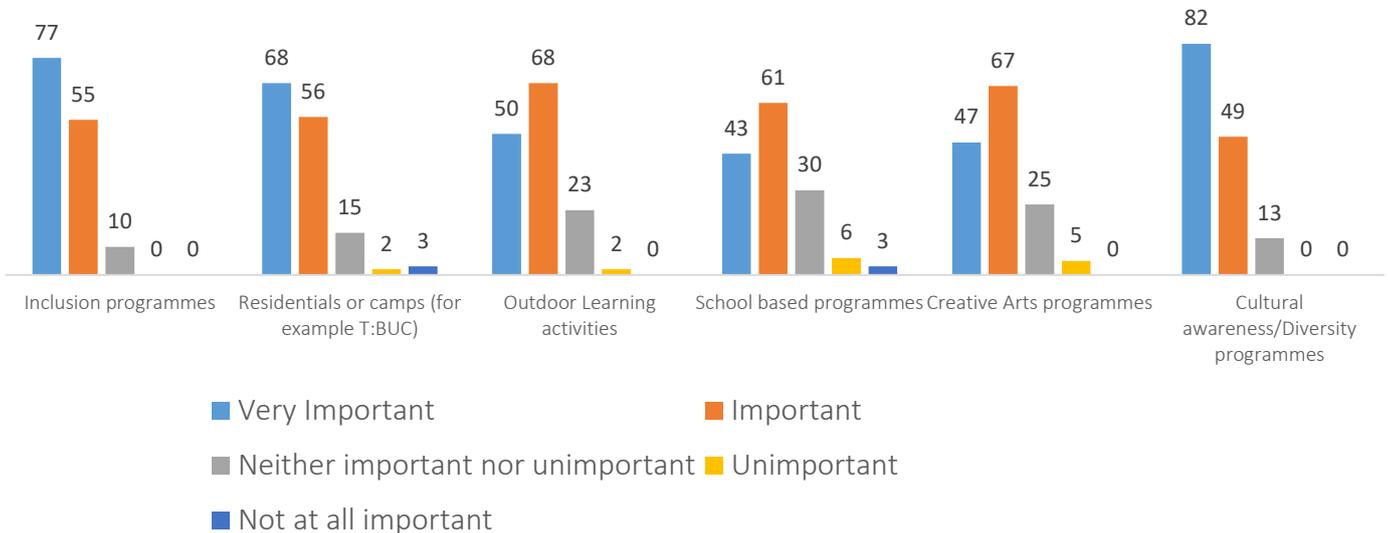
Young People

Good Relations - What opportunities would you like Youth Services in your area to provide so you can meet people from other backgrounds?



Youth Workers

Good Relations - What opportunities should Youth Services in your area provide so that young people can meet others from different backgrounds?



Children and Young People's Summary of Narrative Responses

- Children and young people wanted access to diversity and inclusion programmes that helped them have a better understanding of other cultures and beliefs as well as allowing them to question their own cultural identity.
- They were keen to explore issues around special educational needs, disability and hidden disability.
- Programmes to support LGBTQ groups were also proposed.
- Children and young people also believed that international programmes would provide a greater insight into aspects of good relations.

*I live in a rural area with not much money for transport so I don't get to mix with other people... if there were more opportunities to mix with other people through projects and groups it would help. **Young Person***

*Good Relations work is very important and I would like to be included. **Young Person***

Youth Workers' Summary of Narrative Responses

- Youth workers and volunteers suggested partnership working with schools or shared education initiatives to deliver inclusion and diversity programmes.
- International, residential and thematic based programmes were other suggestions they proposed to support good relations among children and young people.
- More work focussing on special educational needs and disability and discrimination in these areas was proposed.

*We live in a diverse world and all young people should be included and feel accepted within our youth clubs. Youth Workers and EA need to be proactive and thoughtful of young people with additional needs and including them and providing the same opportunities as all young people. Young people should be seen by their ability and not discriminated due to their disability. **Youth Worker***

Discussion

Whilst good relations is not formally defined in legislation, the Equality Commission has developed the following working definition to support the development of good relations in Northern Ireland. *The growth of relationships and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms.*²⁵

The Northern Ireland Executive's strategy, Together Building United Communities (T:BUC) promotes good relations in Northern Ireland that challenges sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance. It celebrates cultural diversity finding ways for everyone to live, study, work and socialise together without feeling threatened. The T:BUC strategy, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

Statistics from the Executive Office report that 70% of children and young people in Northern Ireland had been involved in projects with other schools, 60% had shared classes and 48% had shared sports facilities or equipment. However, less than half of all children and young people (46%), believe that relations between Catholics and Protestants were better than they were five years ago.

The majority of respondents to the Youth Service survey, 70%, noted that they had opportunities to meet, learn and socialise with children and young people from different backgrounds in their own area. However, for those not engaged with Youth Services the figure was only 55% and for those identifying as gender other the figure was 60%. Three quarters of youth workers and volunteers (75%) supported the view that children and young people had opportunities to meet, learn and

socialise with others from different backgrounds in their area. This is interesting given that the majority of children and young people live and are educated separately, however, in the last number of years many young people have benefitted from participation in T:BUC camps.

Despite the Good Relations policy, Northern Ireland remains a divided community. The education system is segregated with the majority of children and young people attending schools based on their religion. Public and social housing is overwhelmingly segregated between the two communities and this can lead to inter-community tensions, involving children and young people especially at contentious times of the year and particularly at interface areas. This can also lead to children and young people coming under the influence of paramilitaries.

Of those children and young people responding to why they did not interact with others from different backgrounds, one-third had no interest in meeting people from other backgrounds whilst more than half had no opportunity to meet people from other backgrounds within their community, reflecting the segregated nature of Northern Irish society. The majority of youth workers and volunteers (82%) supported this view suggesting that children and young people had limited opportunities to meet people from other backgrounds within their community.

Northern Ireland has become a much more culturally diverse place in recent years. However, in the last number of years racist hate crimes have exceeded sectarian hate crimes. A recent Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey highlighted increasing levels of intolerance among people in Northern Ireland and the 18-24 year old age group were the most intolerant.²⁶ At a recent engagement event young people supported the view that Youth Services could provide safe spaces

²⁵ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2008, Promoting Good Relations, ECNI, Belfast.

²⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/belfast-and-beyond/northern-irelands-increasing-problem-racism>

for children and young people and promote inclusion and embrace and celebrate difference.

The most favoured programmes identified by children and young people to improving good relations were outdoor learning activities, cultural awareness and diversity programmes and residential or camps, highlighting existing provision. At a stakeholder event young people also wanted more access to international programmes to meet need in this area. Youth workers and volunteers reported that cultural awareness and diversity programmes, inclusion programmes and residential and camps were the best ways to improve good relations among children and young people.

Other marginal groups also experience intolerance and prejudice. For example, the LGBTQ community reported that they have been

subjected to political and social intolerance, where their rights have been denied and not respected. For many within this community, discrimination and prejudice begins in school and many young people noted ongoing bullying and harassment. The vast majority of young people identifying as gender other reported that they would like to see cultural awareness or diversity programmes delivered by Youth Services to meet their needs or raise awareness of their particular issues.

The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate action of its members.

Coretta Scott King





Participation



Area of Enquiry 4: Participation

Key Facts

- The overall attendance figures for schools in Northern Ireland in 2017/18 was 94.2%.
- 15 pupils were expelled from schools in Northern Ireland in 2017/18.
- 4,069 pupils were suspended from schools in Northern Ireland in 2017/18. (3,199 male pupils (78.6%), 870 female pupils (21.4%)).
- 214,930 children and young people live in a rural area.
- According to the last census (2011) there are 8,000 young carers in Northern Ireland.
- 15,290 newcomer children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- 3,109 children and young people looked after attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- From April - June 2019 there were 20,000 young people (aged 16-24) in Northern Ireland who were NEET. This represents 10.2% of all young people aged 16-24.
- 122,392 children and young people were registered with a youth group in 2017/18.
- Figures from EA Youth Services reveal that there are currently 2,034 young people volunteering.
- 1,027 Traveller children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- 660 Roma children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.

Why is this measure important?

Article 12 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that: *Every child*

²⁷ https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_summary-1.pdf?_ga=2.10450293.1730959173.1571222212-2071504256.1570712098

*has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.*²⁷

Children and young people's participation in decision making on issues that affect them has increasingly been recognised and valued as a right. It has also been reported that successfully engaging children and young people in the institutions, communities and contexts in which they live and building their capacity as active citizens can be a critical factor in their positive development as individuals, enhance their career prospects and life chances and support their positive contribution to these same contexts and institutions.²⁸

Participation is the process whereby children and young people can influence decisions about their lives and directly contribute to decisions that affect them. Participation enhances children and young people's personal, social and political development, provides practical experiences and teaches them how to behave responsibly.²⁹

Participation can stimulate an awareness of wider societal issues that can negatively affect their local communities. As well as giving children and young people a voice, active participation ensures that they are valued within their own communities and are part of the decision making process that can bring about solutions to the challenges they face.

The benefits of participation for children and young people are many and include some of the following: empowering children and young people to be active citizens and engage with wider society; developing leadership skills; increasing their sense of ownership and belonging; improving their communication, negotiation and collaboration skills; enhancing their self-confidence and self-esteem; allowing them to gain

²⁸ Chaskin, R.J., McGregor, C. & Brady, B. (2018), *Engaging Urban Youth: Community, Citizenship and Democracy*, NUI, Galway.

²⁹ <https://www.niccy.org/media/1330/niccy-advice-benefits-of-engagement-with-children-and-young-people-dec-14.pdf>

a better understanding of democratic processes; and improving their career prospects. Participation also allows children and young people to express their needs and ideas.

Participation comes in many forms: attending school or a youth centre; involvement in social activities and clubs; playing sport, music or cultural activities; youth leadership, volunteering and peer mentoring. Meaningful participation can enhance a child or young person's sense of belonging, connectedness and feeling of being valued, which can contribute to positive mental health.³⁰

What are the factors that can negatively impact on a child or young person's participation?

Research indicates that there are substantial barriers to participation for certain groups of children and young people, particularly the most marginalised and vulnerable.³¹ The reasons are many and varied. In some cases there may be a lack of Youth Services or other adequate local provision in a community. Children and young people may be disaffected from schools and fail to engage in education and will therefore lack the necessary skills to engage in wider society.

In some instances children and young people may disengage due to social, economic, cultural or language barriers and challenges, for example, living in a low income household or in a deprived community, growing up in a rural area, being a newcomer, a child or young person looked after or having a disability or special educational need.

Participative activities may be inaccessible due to their location, lack of transport, cost implications or limited digital connectivity. Many children and young people living in rural areas face these challenges. Opportunities to participate may conflict with school or other commitments or be inaccessible due to a disability. It is also possible that children and young people may feel they are not well enough supported or lack motivation and confidence to participate.

Children learn how to make good decisions by making decisions, not by following directions.
Alfie Kohn.



³⁰ <http://mypeer.org.au/design-implementation/youth-participation-2/benefits-of-youth-participation/>

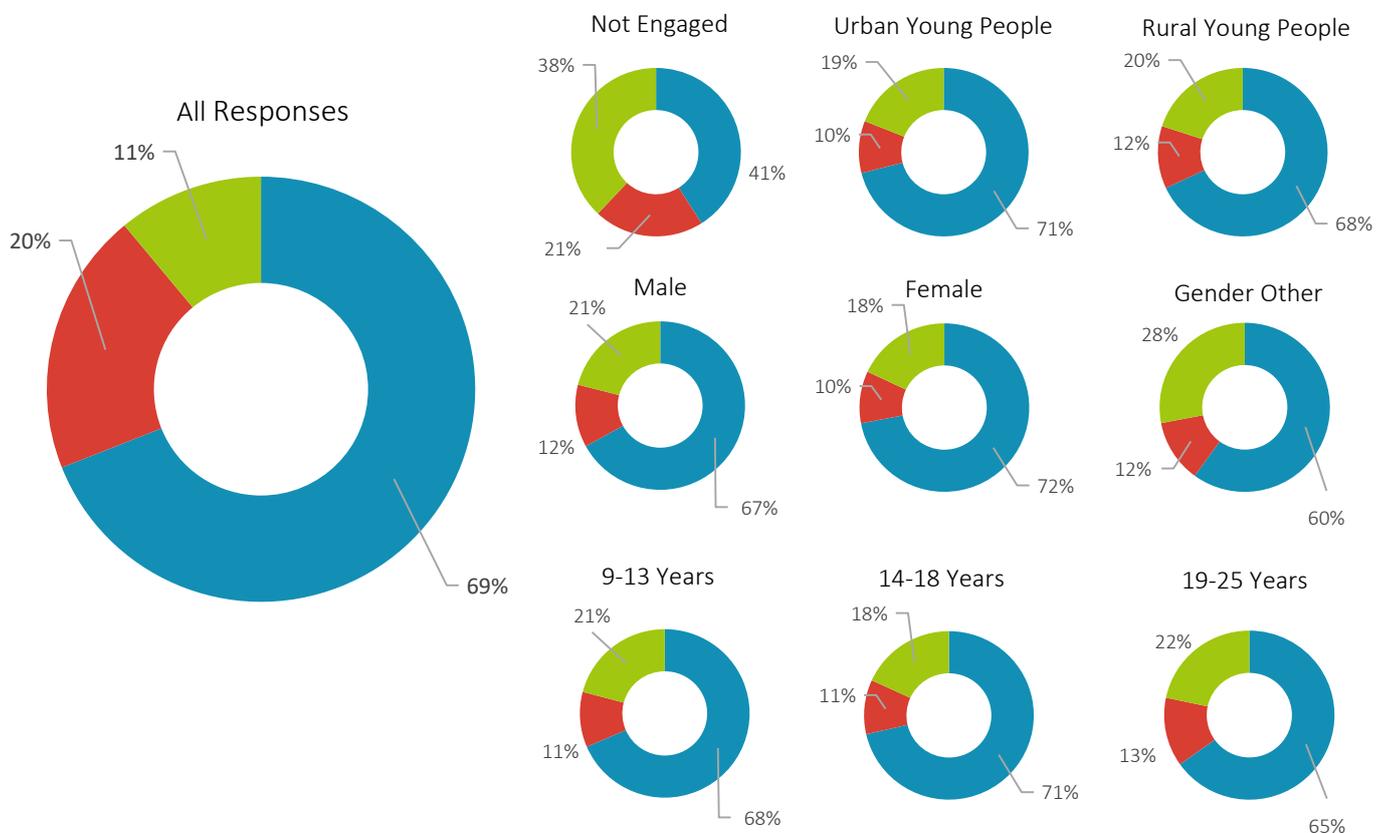
³¹ Holdsworth, R. Stokes, H. Blanchard, M. & Mohamed, M. 2006, Civic Engagement and Young people in the city of Melbourne, Australian Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

Survey Findings – Participation

Yes No Don't Know

Young People

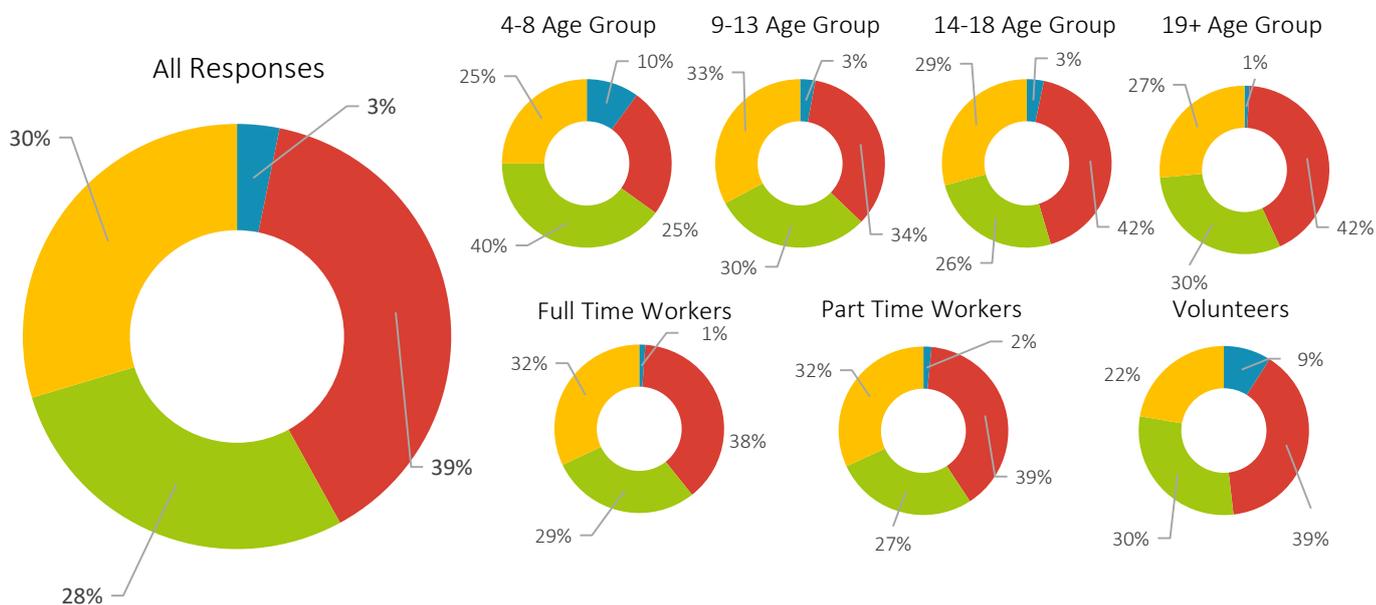
Do you have opportunities to take part in Youth Services in your area?



Not at all Often Sometimes Very Often

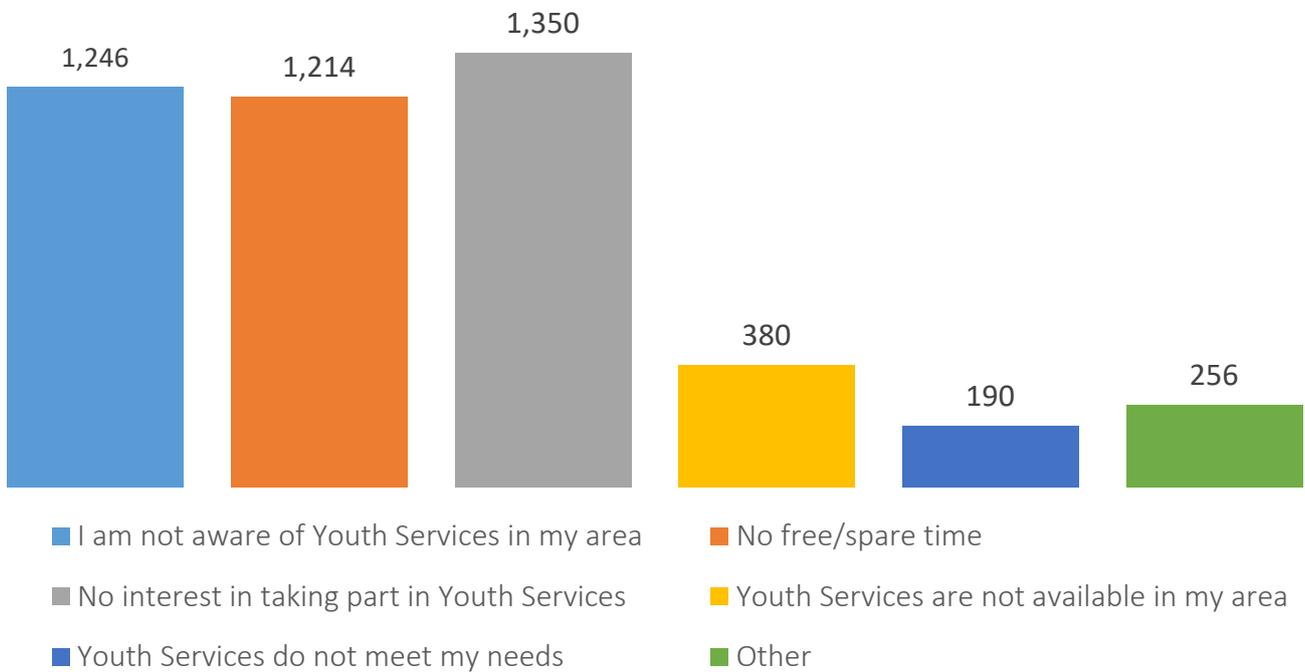
Youth Workers

Please rate how often young people in your area have opportunities to participate in Youth Services.

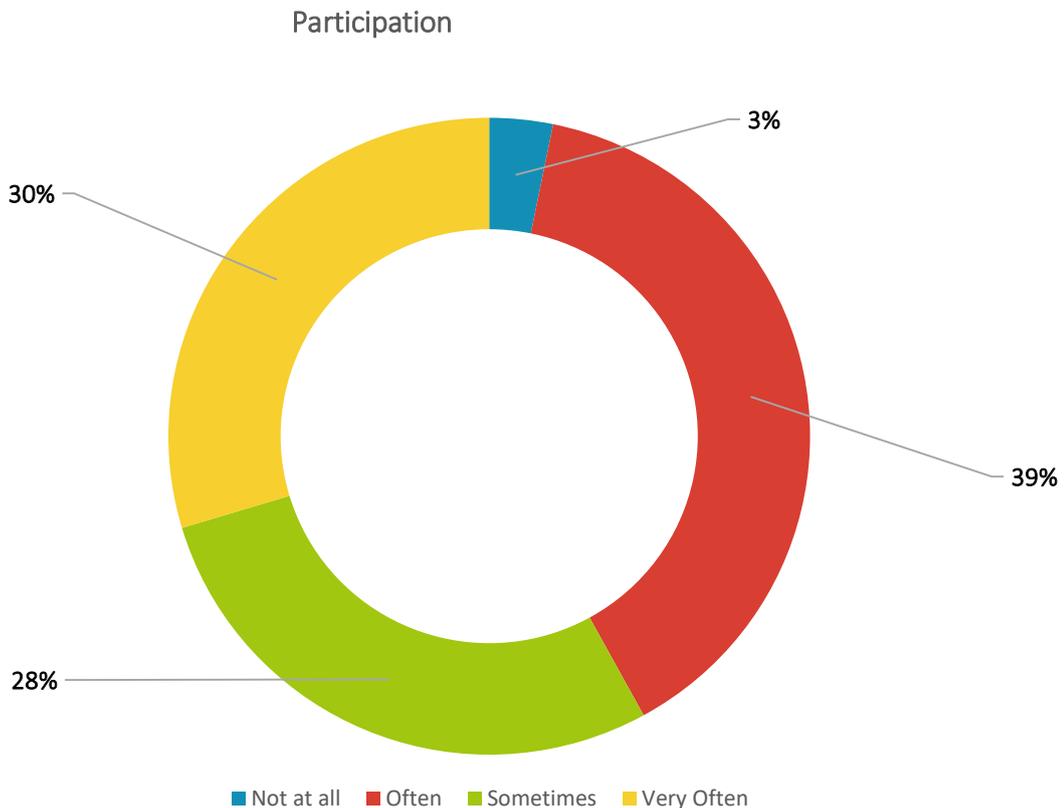


Young People

Participation - Reason you believe you do not have opportunities to take part in Youth Services in your area?

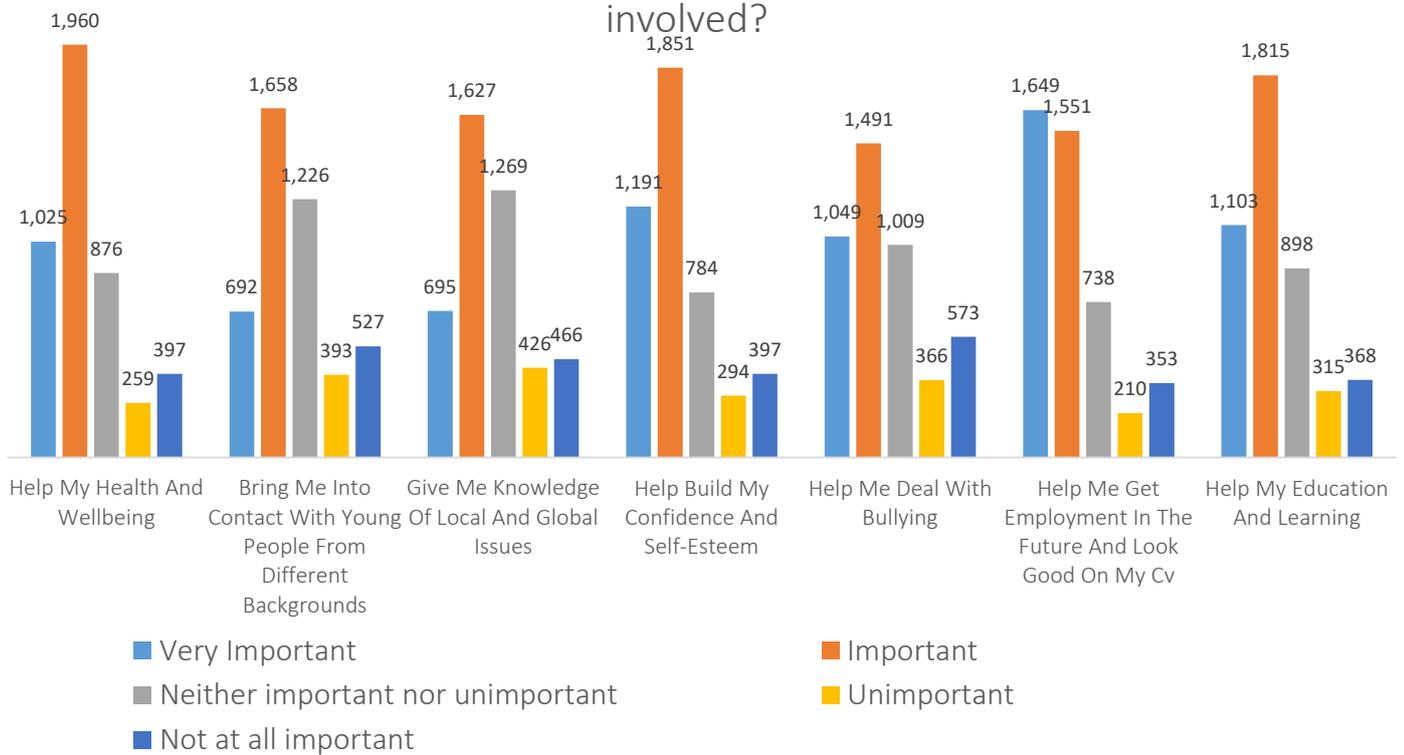


Youth Workers



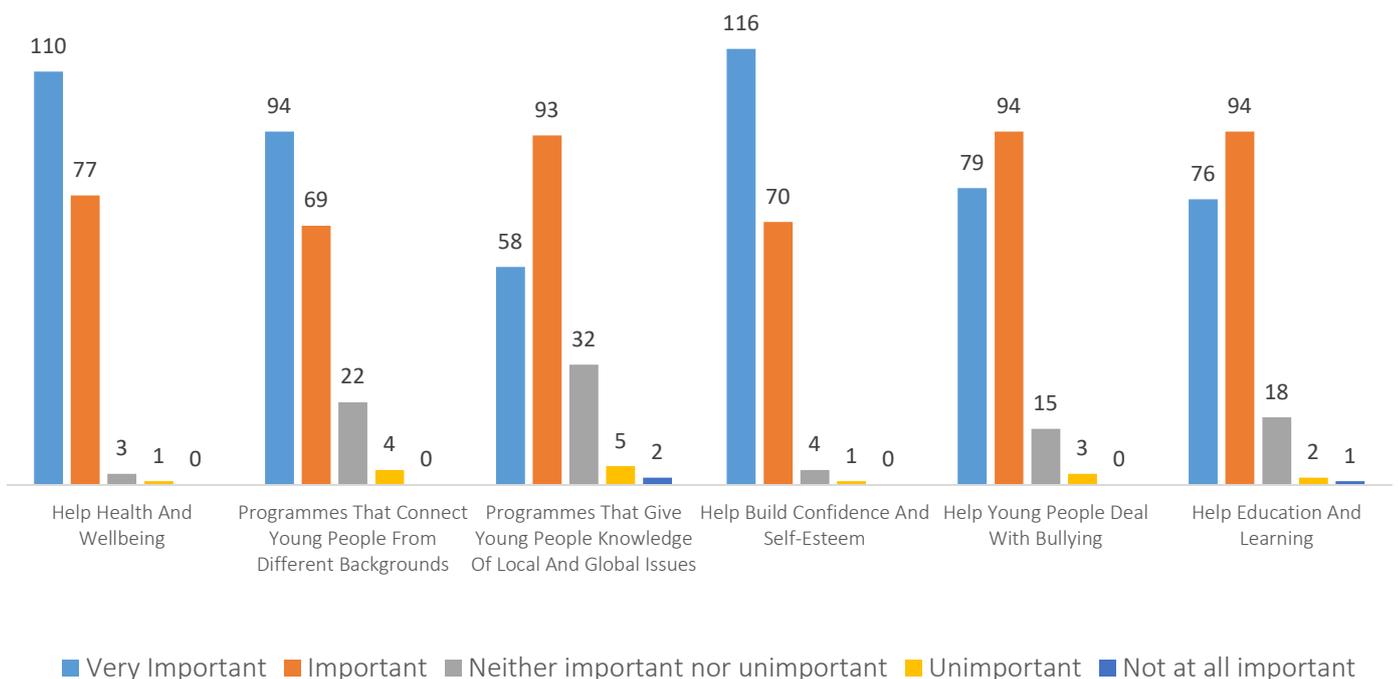
Young People

Participation - What opportunities would you like Youth Services in your area to provide that would encourage you to become involved?



Youth Workers

Participation - What opportunities do you think Youth Services in your area should provide that would encourage young people to become involved?



Children and Young People's Summary of Narrative Responses

- Children and young people valued participating in youth clubs, however, in some instances they were critical of opening times and lack of a weekend service or a service available when they felt they needed it most.
- Some children and young people did not participate due to a lack of one to one support.
- Some failed to participate due to a lack of self-confidence and feelings of social anxiety.
- Children and young people also recognised that those with additional needs or who were vulnerable or from a minority group required more information and support in how they could access Youth Services.
- Afternoon or after school activities would allow some children and young people to participate, particularly those from rural areas.
- Children and young people from rural areas reported that Youth Services were not always available in their area.

*Health and fitness programmes, opportunities to meet with school friends and social activities would help me become more involved. **Young Person***

*Spaces that allow wheel chair users to access youth clubs. **Young Person***

Youth Workers' Summary of Narrative Responses

- Youth workers and volunteers noted that Youth Services did not always meet the physical and learning needs of all children and young people, which was a barrier to participation.
- Family and social circumstances and being from a vulnerable or minority group were also put forward as barriers to participation in Youth Services and society as a whole.
- Children and young people in urban areas had difficulty accessing services because they did not live in an area of high social need, despite having particular needs themselves.
- Children and young people were not always consulted about provision in their area and this put some off participating.
- Rural isolation was also a major barrier to participation.

*Rural deprivation, limited access to services and no extra funds granted to rural areas despite higher cost for travelling!! **Youth Worker***

*Programmes that meet the challenging needs of young people such as their mental and psychological wellbeing due to poverty. **Youth Worker***

Discussion

Most children and young people in Northern Ireland have access to some form of social, cultural or sporting outlet. Participation in school, Youth Services and wider society helps children and young people become more confident and independent. It can also provide opportunities to socialise and make friends with people from different backgrounds.

More than two-thirds of survey respondents stated that they had an opportunity to take part in Youth Services in their area. There was no discernible difference in terms of age or gender, however, only 41% of those not engaged in Youth Services and 60% of those identifying as gender other reported that they did not have opportunities to take part in Youth Services. More than two-thirds of youth workers and volunteers (69%) stated that children and young people in their area had opportunities to participate in Youth Services.

Of those children and young people not accessing Youth Services, 29% reported that Youth Services did not meet their needs, 27% noted that Youth Services were not available in their area and 4% claimed they were not aware of Youth Services in their area.

Young people who have been engaged in social, leisure and cultural activities are in a better position to apply for a university place, a job and training opportunities because they have developed meaningful skills and experiences. As well as participating in an activity they enjoy, children and young people have often developed important life skills, such as communicating with others, teamwork, problem-solving and also gained a higher level of emotional maturity.

The survey results highlighted that children and young people would like to see Youth Services provide support through programmes that helped them obtain employment in the future, programmes that will help with their confidence

and self-esteem and also programmes that supported their education and health and wellbeing. Youth workers and volunteers suggested that programmes to develop their confidence and self-esteem, health and wellbeing programmes and education and learning programmes were most likely to encourage children and young people to become involved in Youth Services.

However, there are significant numbers of children and young people in Northern Ireland for whom participating in wider society is not an option. Many of these children and young people will face barriers and challenges that their peers take for granted. Some such as newcomers may face language and cultural barriers, young carers may not be able to participate due to other commitments, disabled children and young people may have accessibility problems, children and young people from deprived areas or who are homeless may face financial barriers and rural children and young people may face challenges with transport and lack of digital infrastructure.

Interestingly, 68% of rural children and young people stated that Youth Services were available to them. This is despite internal EA research which reported rural children and young people feeling isolated and lacking access to services. It is also important to recognise that social isolation and marginalisation can be interpreted differently depending on geography or cultural environment.

There are also groups of children and young people who fail to attend school or access Youth Services. They may be carers, children and young people looked after, disabled children and young people or those who have simply become disaffected with the formal curriculum. Failing to participate in school, Youth Services or wider society can have a detrimental effect and lead to negative outcomes for children and young people including, social exclusion, low confidence and self-esteem and poor mental health and resilience. A recent report from the Child Poverty

Action Group found that increasing numbers of children and young people from low income families were going hungry. As a consequence, children and young people experience feelings of shame and stigmatisation, feel cut off from their learning and social opportunities due to a lack of money and food.³²

The majority of young people at a local engagement event noted that Youth Services catered for all learning styles, however some children and young people were reluctant to participate in learning opportunities either at school or with Youth Services due to low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, anxiety or a fear of failure. The survey revealed that a high proportion of children and young people would like to participate in programmes that would improve their confidence and self-esteem. This again highlights the value of youth work and the impact it can have on a child or young person's life and future outcomes.

Through consultations with children and young people it has become evident that they want to participate in wider society. It was recognised that Youth Services are ideally placed to provide children and young people with a platform to have their voices heard and responded to through Local Advisory Groups, Youth Councils and other civic events and fora. Many suggested that this form of participation should be continued and expanded upon. It was also reported that participation in wider society would improve their overall life chances, career opportunities and general health and wellbeing.

Discourse and critical thinking are essential tools when it comes to securing progress in a democratic society. But in the end, unity and engaged participation are what make it happen. Aberjhani



³² <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/why-food-not-answer-hunger-uk>





Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity

Area of Enquiry 5: Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity

Key Facts

- The most recent available figures indicate that there are 3,109 children and young people looked after in Northern Ireland. (154 of these are on the Child Protection Register).
- According to the Simon Community there are at least 6,000 homeless children and young people across Northern Ireland. (Homeless can mean living in unsuitable and unstable accommodation).³³
- According to the last census (2011) there are 8,000 young carers in Northern Ireland.
- 15,290 newcomer children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- 77,965 children and young people have a special educational need or a disability.
- According to the Office of National Statistics, 4.2% of young people in the UK aged 16-24 identify as either lesbian, gay or bisexual. In Northern Ireland this equates to approximately 11,500 young people.
- 1,027 Traveller children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- 660 Roma children and young people attend schools in Northern Ireland.
- In April - June 2019 there were 20,000 young people (aged 16-24) in Northern Ireland who were NEET). This represents 10.2% of all young people aged 16-24.

Why is this measure important?

An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.³⁴

Inclusion ensures that all children and young people regardless of their background are able to fully participate and access opportunities in all aspects of their lives. This is about ensuring that children and young people have access to services and resources that are accessible, safe and welcoming to all and that do not exclude anyone.

Diversity is the term used to describe an incredible range of human differences. It includes, but is not limited to, age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, disability, religion or belief, national origin, and political beliefs. Diversity is about taking account of differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on and celebrating these differences.

Equality is not about treating everybody the same. It is about treating everybody fairly.³⁵ Equality of opportunity ensures that all children and young people have an equal chance to participate fully in society and to take up opportunities. Equality of opportunity also ensures that children and young people have an equal chance to reach their potential and be the best that they can be.

What are the factors that can negatively impact on a child or young person experiencing prejudice and discrimination?

There is a strong legislative framework which protects individuals and groups of people from discrimination, however inequalities persist. Whilst the majority of children and young people in Northern Ireland enjoy safe, happy and active

³³

<https://www.simoncommunity.org/homelessness/knowledge-hub/homelessness-in-ni>

³⁴ Equalities Review (2007) Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review. Norwich: HMSO.

³⁵ <http://www.cwvys.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/HB-Equalities.pdf>

lives, there are significant numbers of children and young people who experience discrimination and prejudice or face barriers because of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability or even where they live. In some cases, children and young people may face multiple discrimination.

Inclusion, diversity and equality of opportunity are the basis of a fair and equitable society. However if they are not acknowledged or respected it can lead to a number of negative consequences. Inequalities can arise from discrimination and prejudice that children and young people may face based on an aspect of their identity.³⁶ A recent report from Barnsley Council noted that inequality and discrimination and a lack of respect for others hold us all back.³⁷

Children and young people experiencing prejudice and discrimination are; less likely to feel part of a group and participate, more likely to withdraw from school and society or suffer poor mental health which can have a negative impact on their academic and social outcomes. Those most likely to encounter discrimination will include some of

the following groups; children and young people looked after, those with a special educational need or a disability, newcomers or those from a minority ethnic group, young carers, young people identifying as LGBTQ, children and young people excluded from school or at risk of exclusion, young people registered as NEET, victims or witnesses of domestic abuse, those at risk of offending, living in a deprived or rural area, homeless children and young people and school age mothers.

When everyone is included, everyone wins.

Jesse Jackson

Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance!

Verna Myers



³⁶ <http://www.seemescotland.org/>

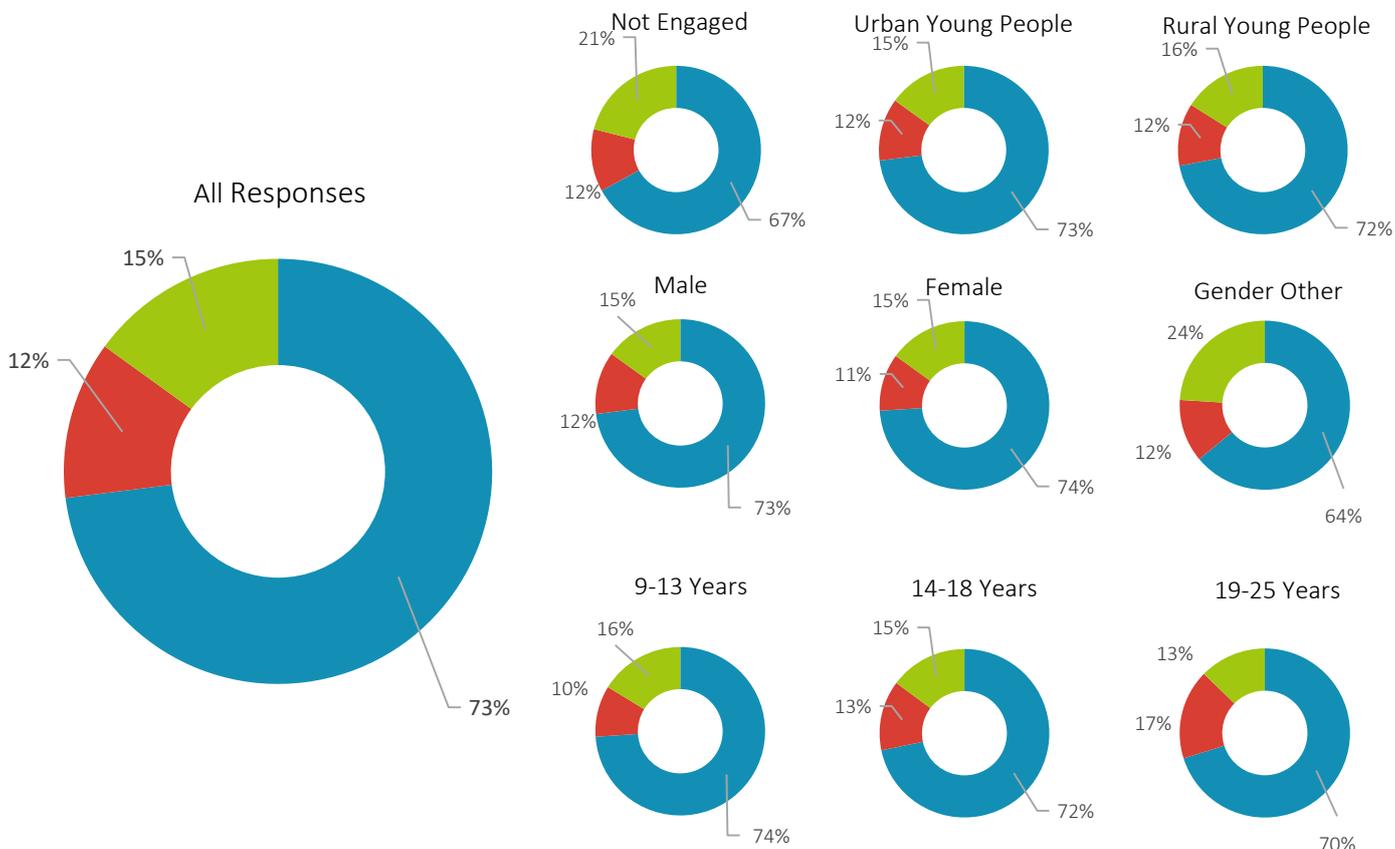
³⁷ <https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s36773/Appendix%201.pdf>

Survey Findings – Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity

■ Yes
 ■ No
 ■ Don't Know

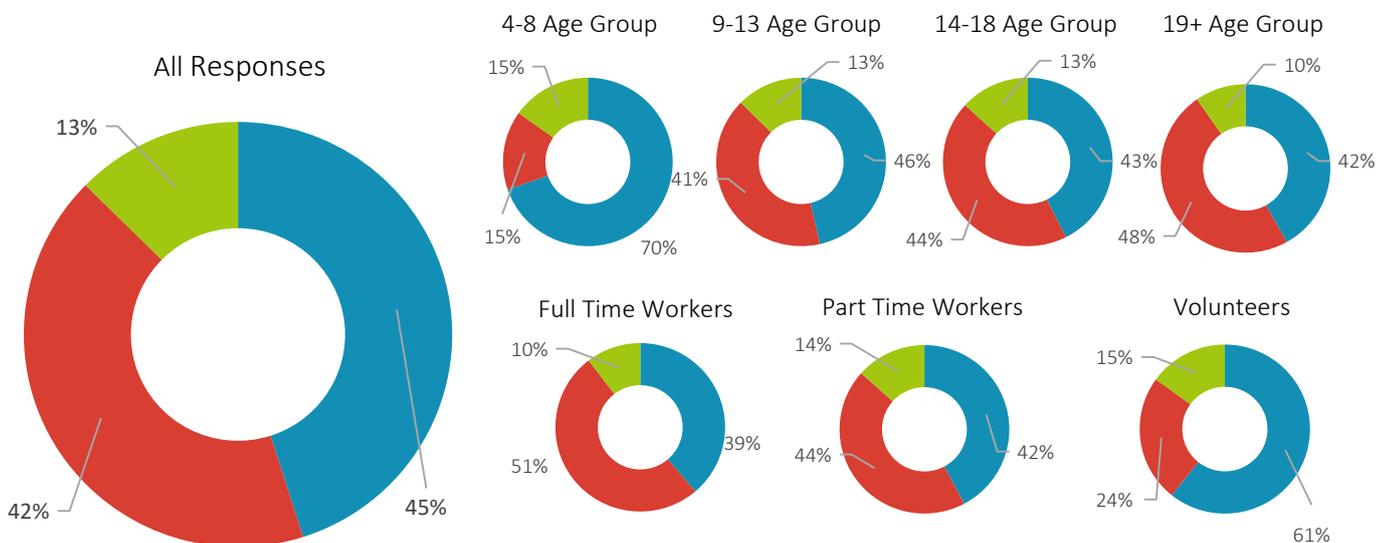
Young People

Young people in your area have the same opportunities in life and are treated the same as other young people?



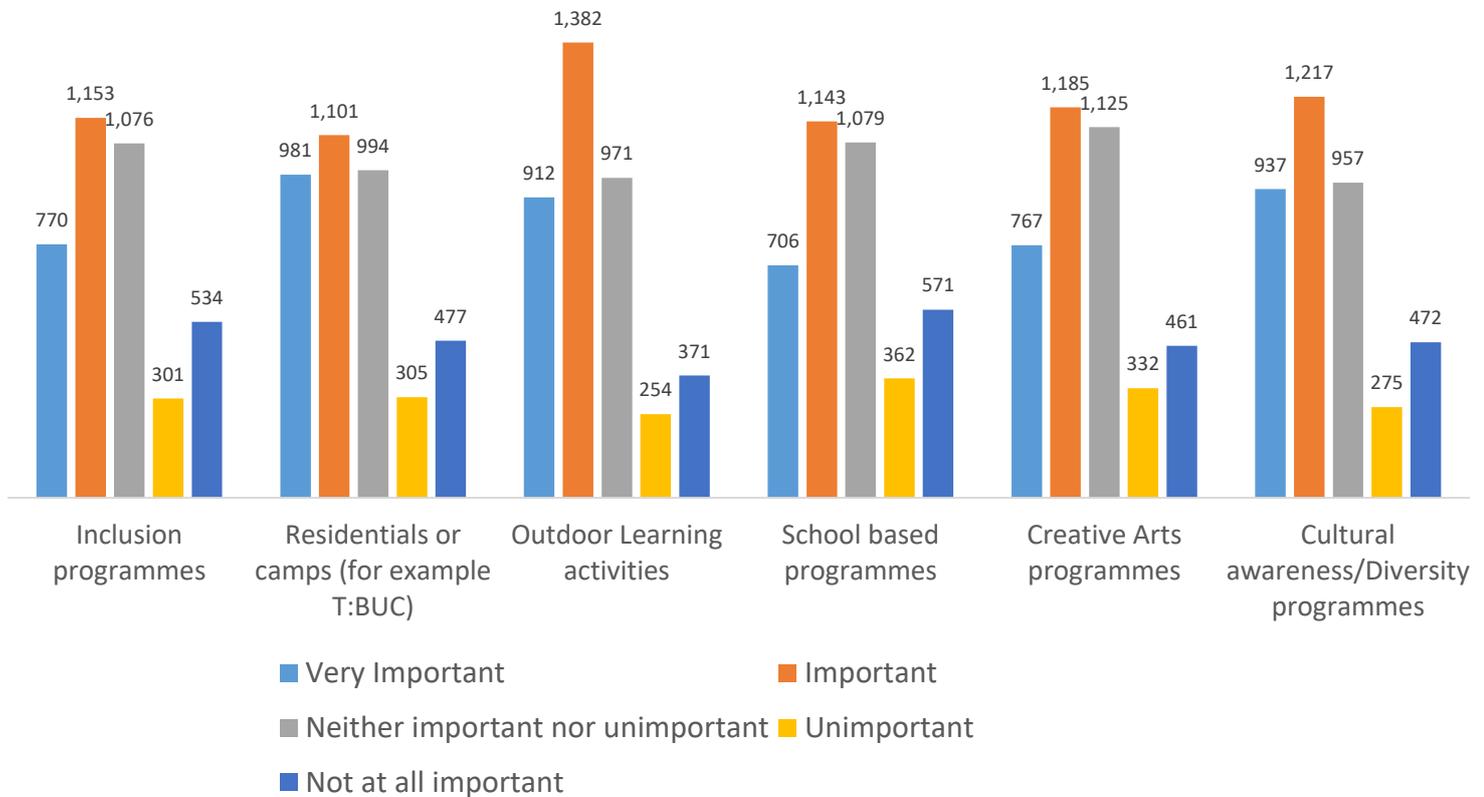
Youth Workers

Young people in your area have the same opportunities in life and are treated the same as other young people?



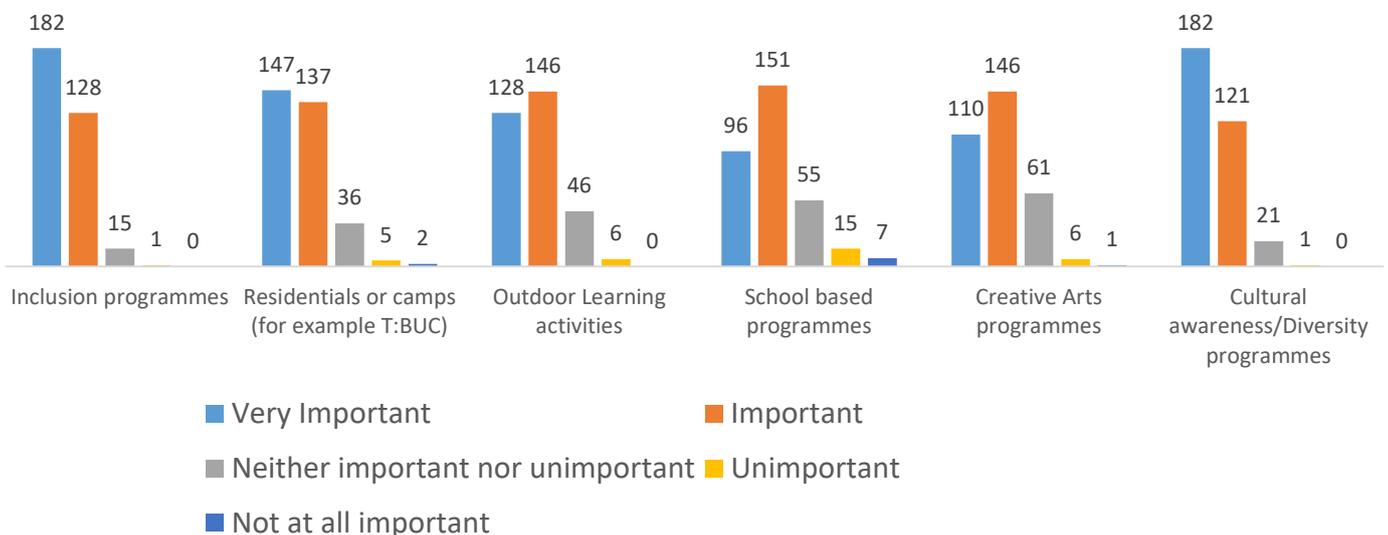
Young People

Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity - What opportunities would you like Youth Services in your area to provide so you can feel more included?



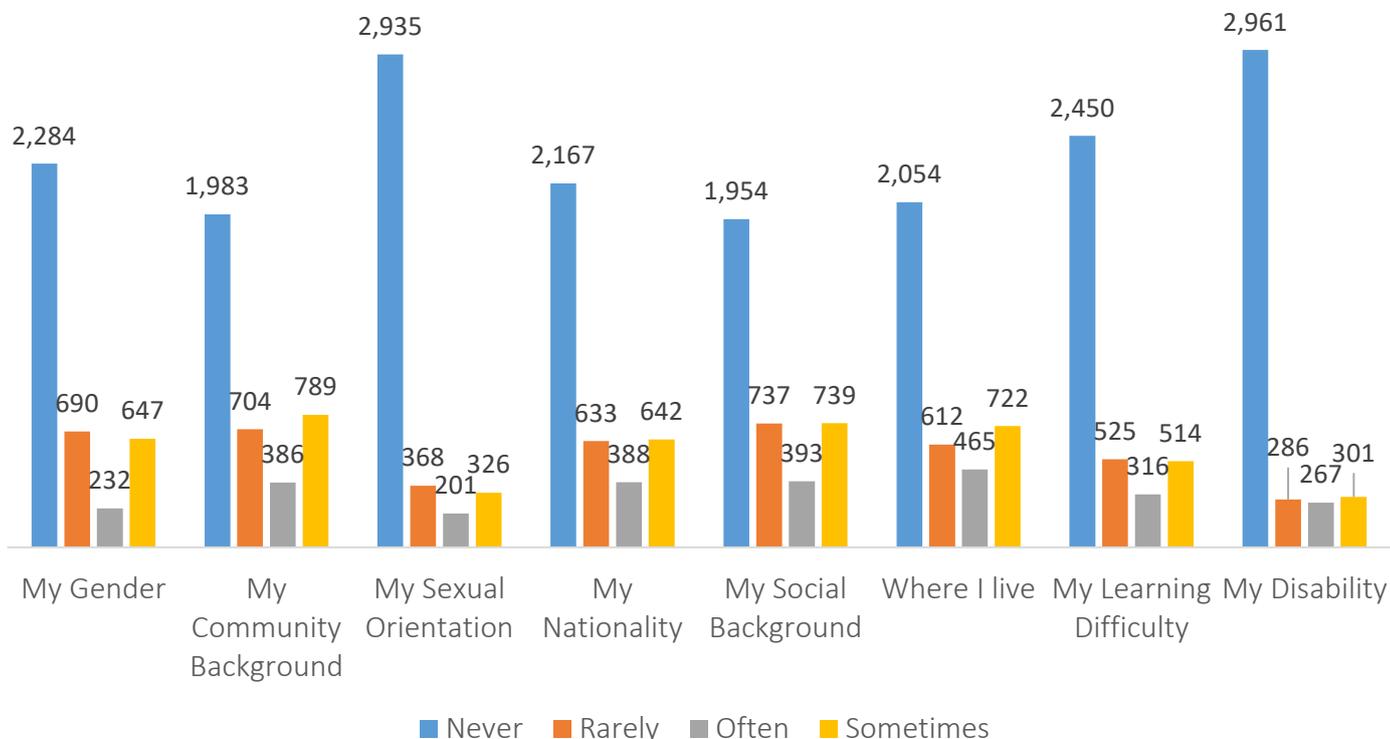
Youth Workers

Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity - What opportunities should Youth Services in your area provide so young people can feel more included?



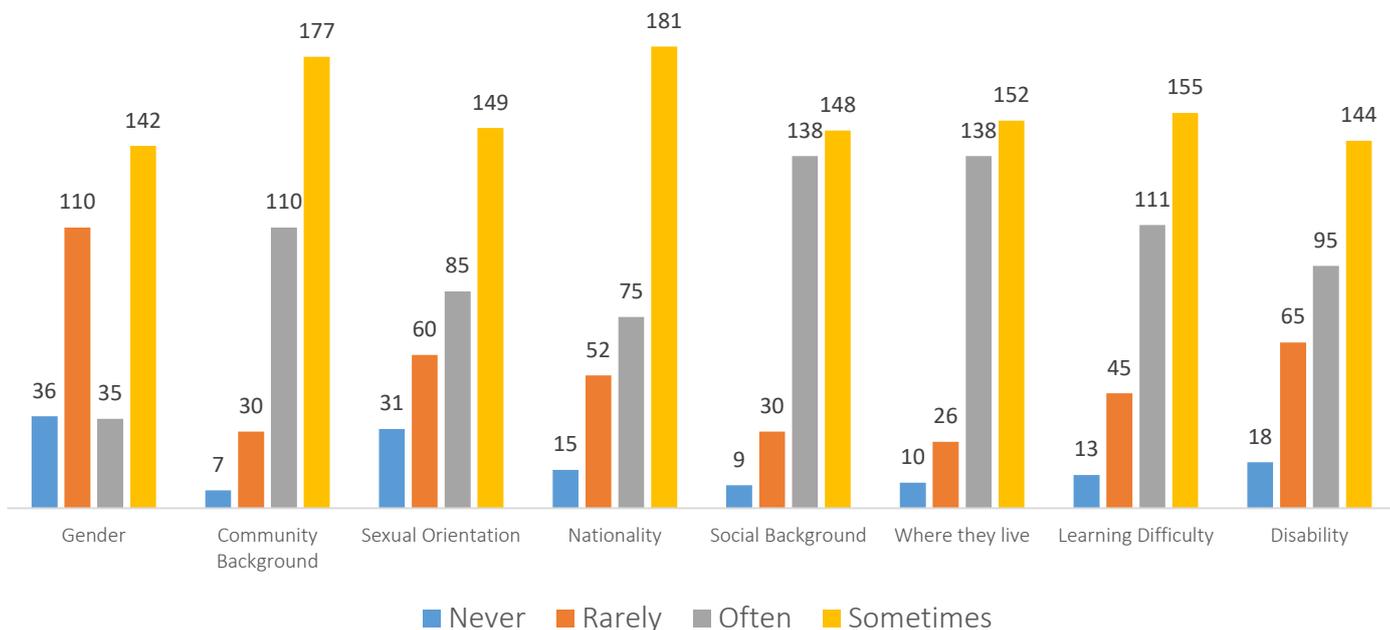
Young People

Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity - I feel I am treated differently because



Youth Workers

Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity - I feel Young People are treated differently because



Children and Young People's Summary of Narrative Responses

- Children and young people believed they were not included and felt different for a variety of reasons, including their social and community background, their ethnicity, religion, gender, the language they spoke or the fact that they were a member of a vulnerable group.
- Some children and young people suggested they were bullied and intimidated because of their appearance and felt they were given limited support to positively express themselves.
- Other children and young people believed their poor mental health or having a learning difficulty were barriers to them feeling included.
- Some suggested that Youth Services should widen the scope and range of inclusion and diversity programmes they deliver.
- Young carers and other vulnerable children and young people noted that their opportunities to be included were restricted due to their circumstances and the opinions of their peers.

Youth Workers' Summary of Narrative Responses

- Youth workers and volunteers suggested developing more advanced inclusion and diversity programmes to challenge the increasing issues that children and young people were experiencing.
- There was a perception among some youth workers and volunteers that the most vulnerable in society continue to be marginalised.
- It was proposed that social action and civic engagement programmes and also programmes targeting the most vulnerable be introduced to support all children and young people in this area.

True inclusion work and not a one off grant each year for a short period of time. True inclusion is 52 weeks of the year and let's take it seriously! Youth Worker



Discussion

The EA is committed to preventing discrimination, eliminating prejudice, promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity. As an organisation, EA encourages staff and the children and young people they work with to have respect for themselves and others. The EA delivers services that recognise and build upon the strengths of the children and young people in their care from all cultures, religions, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability and backgrounds, in ways that meet their needs and help them to achieve their full potential.

However, there are marginalised groups of vulnerable children and young people in our society who experience discrimination and do not have the same levels of opportunity to access education or the curriculum, Youth Services or other activities because of their particular situation, such as race, gender, religion, disability or where they live.

At a recent stakeholder engagement event, participants noted that among the specific groups that are currently excluded were homeless young people, young carers, young parents, LGBTQ young people and members of the Travelling Community. It was also suggested that a lack of Irish Medium provision was a barrier for some children and young people feeling included.

Stakeholders also noted that some of the barriers children and young people faced in terms of being able to participate, included, transport, lack of facilities, access to centres, language and communication, caring responsibilities and a lack of money.

Almost three quarters of all respondents to the survey (73%) noted that they had the same opportunities in life as others and were treated the same. However, for those not engaged with Youth Services the figure was 67% and for those identifying as gender other the figure was 64%. This highlights that some vulnerable groups

believe they do not feel included or have the same opportunities as others. It is interesting to note that only 45% of youth workers and volunteers believed that children and young people in their area had the same opportunities in life and were treated the same as others.

For those children and young people who believed they were not treated the same as others the reasons given were because of where they lived or their social and community backgrounds. Interestingly, youth workers and volunteers identified the same reasons as the children and young people. This appears to indicate that many feel discriminated against because of where they live and the disadvantages they face in their daily lives and within their communities.

Internal EA research noted that children and young people from deprived communities and rural areas did not believe they had the same opportunities to participate and achieve in education and participate in Youth Services and consequently this will cause them to have poorer health and education outcomes and worse career prospects than their peers. Participants at a stakeholder engagement event noted that in rural areas there was a lack of facilities and access to services for children and young people to come together and promote inclusion, especially with others from Section 75 groups.

All children and young people have the right to be heard. Negative attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes towards children and young people should be addressed. Specific individuals and groups may encounter systematic, attitudinal and physical barriers to equality because of their personal circumstances or characteristics. This exclusion may result in these vulnerable groups of children and young people feeling isolated and marginalised. Discrimination, prejudiced based bullying and social isolation can impact a young person's educational outcomes and also affect their overall health and wellbeing, loss of self-esteem, lack of motivation and depression and

anxiety, leading them to withdraw from mainstream society.

Children and young people reported that in order to address some of their concerns around Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity that they would most like to engage in outdoor learning activities, cultural awareness and diversity programmes and residential or camps. Youth workers and volunteers stated that inclusion programmes, cultural awareness and diversity programmes and residential and camps

were the best services to provide so that children and young people felt included.

Both children and young people and youth workers noted that it was important to work with children and young people in the design of programmes to meet their needs in this area. It was also noted that children and young people felt safe to explore these issues in a youth work setting.







Living in Safety & Stability

Area of Enquiry 6: Living in Safety and Stability

Key Facts

- There are 18 interface areas in Northern Ireland.
 - 10 in Belfast
 - 5 in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon
 - 3 in Derry and Strabane
- The most recent available figures indicate that there are 3,109 children and young people looked after in Northern Ireland. (154 of these are on the Child Protection Register).
- According to the Simon Community there are at least 6,000 homeless young people across Northern Ireland. (Homeless can mean living in unsuitable or unstable accommodation).³⁸
- According to the last census (2011) there are 8,000 young carers in Northern Ireland.
- The most recent figures reveal that there were 31,531 domestic abuse incidences in Northern Ireland.
- The total number of movements within the Juvenile Justice Centre in 2017/18 was 582. (443 in 2016/17).
- In 2017/18 a total of 7,715 days of custody was provided by the Juvenile Justice Centre.
- The total number of individual young people in custody in 2017/18 was 167. (139 in 2016/17)
- In April-June 2019 there were 20,000 NEET young people aged 16-24.

Why is this measure important?

Children and young people experience their formative years through the relationships they form with their parents or guardians and other adult role models who support them. If these relationships provide safe, stable and nurturing environments then children and young people are more likely to have a positive impact on their physically and emotionally development. However, if these relationships are unstable or abusive then this can have a negative impact on a child or young person's physical and emotional health and development.

A child or young person's early life experiences shape who they are and can potentially inform their life-long learning and health. A recent study noted that children and young people thrive in stable and nurturing homes and environments where they know what to expect and feel that their relationships, health and safety are secure.³⁹ To develop to their full potential, children and young people require safe and secure housing, a balanced diet, access to medical care, secure relationships with parents and guardians, including nurturing and responsive parenting and high-quality learning opportunities at home and in school.⁴⁰

The best way to make children good is to make them happy. Oscar Wilde

³⁸

<https://www.simoncommunity.org/homelessness/knowledge-hub/homelessness-in-ni>

³⁹ <https://ifstudies.org/blog/how-instability-affects-kids>

⁴⁰ Sanderson, H., & Huerta, S. (2013), The Negative Effects of Instability on Child Development: A Research Synthesis, The Urban Initiative, Washington.

What are the factors that can negatively impact on a child or young person living safely and securely?

Adverse childhood experiences can have a detrimental effect on a child or young person's personal and social development. As well as having negative consequences for the individual it can also impact on other children and young people in local communities. A recent study noted that a negative home environment can lead to a series of problems, including among others, poor language development, deficit in school readiness, later behavioural problems and mental health issues.⁴¹

There are a number of risk factors such as socio-economic, demographic, environmental and cultural influences which can directly impact on a child or young person. These range from instability in terms of parenting, their home environment, the lack of a male role model, education and employment and can include negative transitions which they may experience, such as family relationships, including divorce or remarriage, moving home and school, neglect and witnessing or being the victims of domestic abuse.

These negative influences on children or young people can have serious consequences for their

future life chances. Vulnerable children and young people are more inclined to have behavioural problems, poor educational attainment and limited career prospects and poorer general and mental health. They are also likely to have limited personal resilience and engage in risk taking activity including alcohol and drug misuse, anti-social behaviour, inappropriate use of social media leading to child sexual exploitation, crime, gang involvement and are more susceptible to be influenced or threatened by paramilitaries. Other consequences include, isolation, being bullied, homelessness, stigmatisation and social exclusion.

Children and young people from Section 75 groups are those most at risk of not living safely and securely.

Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.

Nelson Mandela

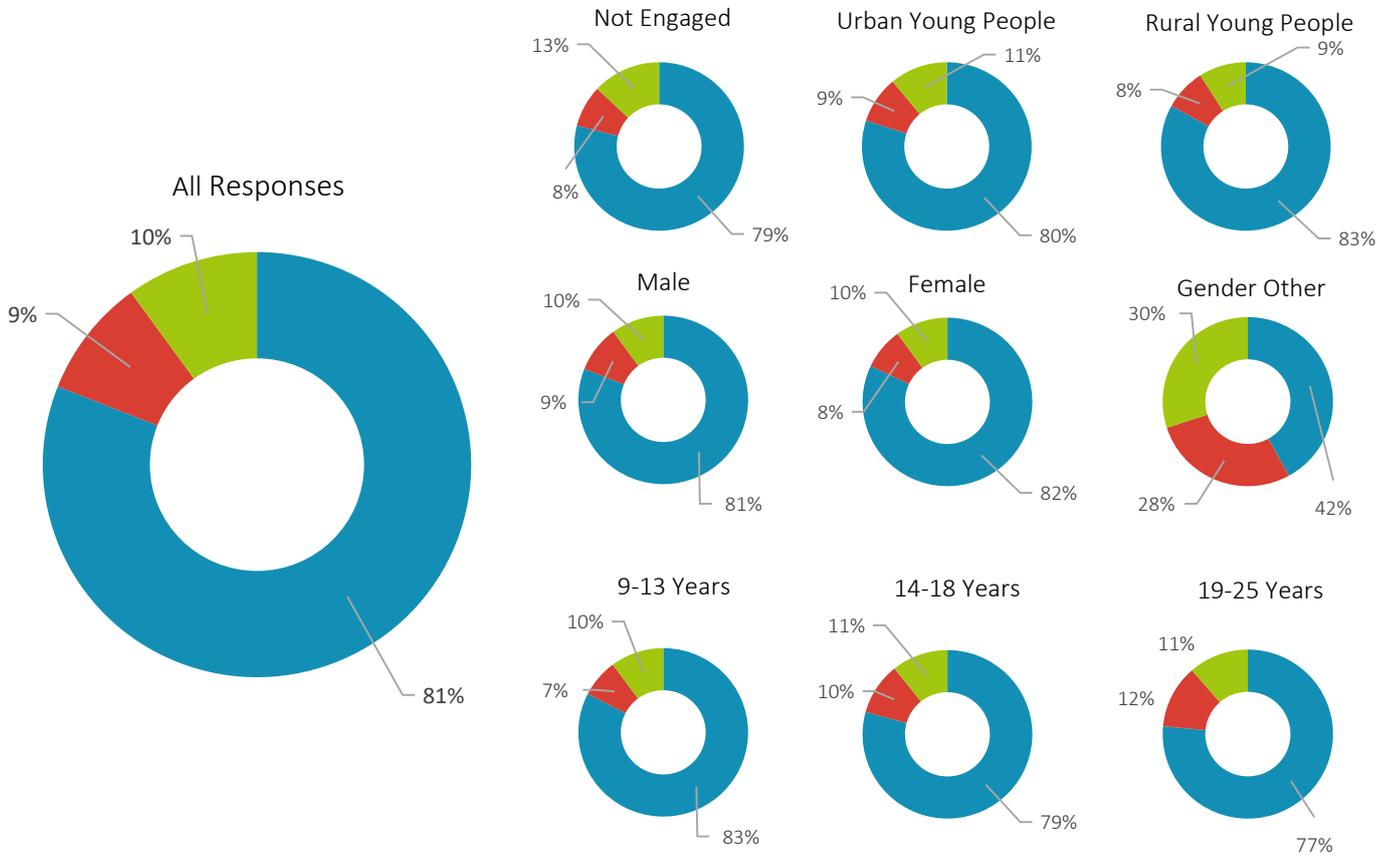


Survey Findings – Living in Safety and Stability

Yes No Don't Know

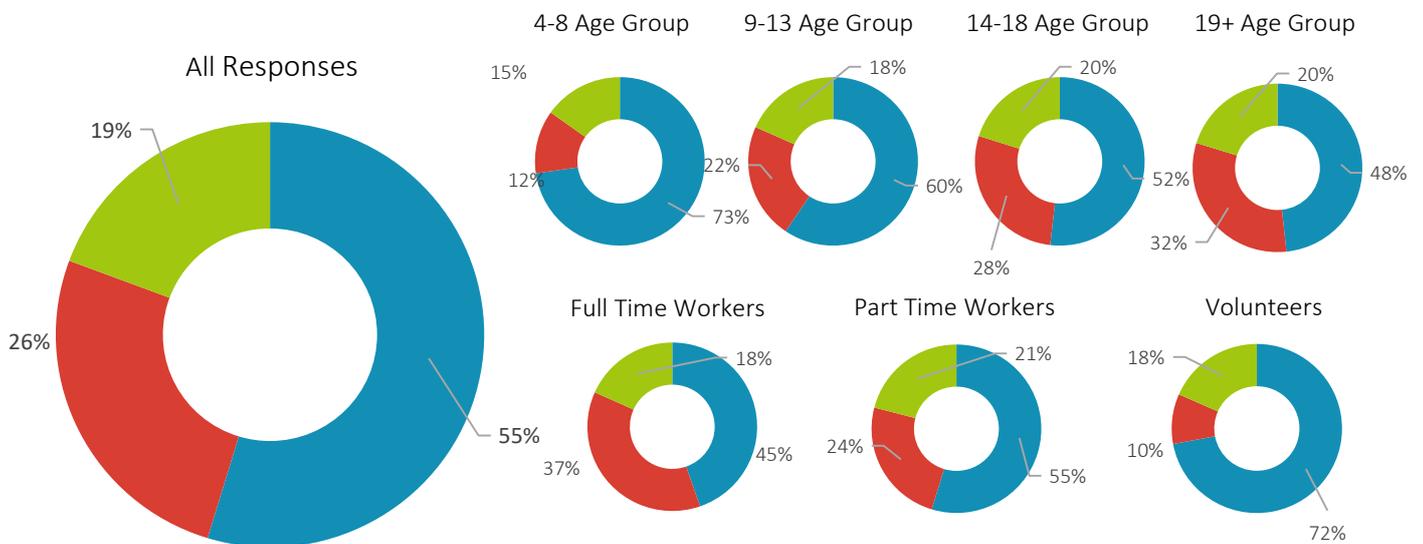
Young People

Young People that you work with feel safe in their own community?



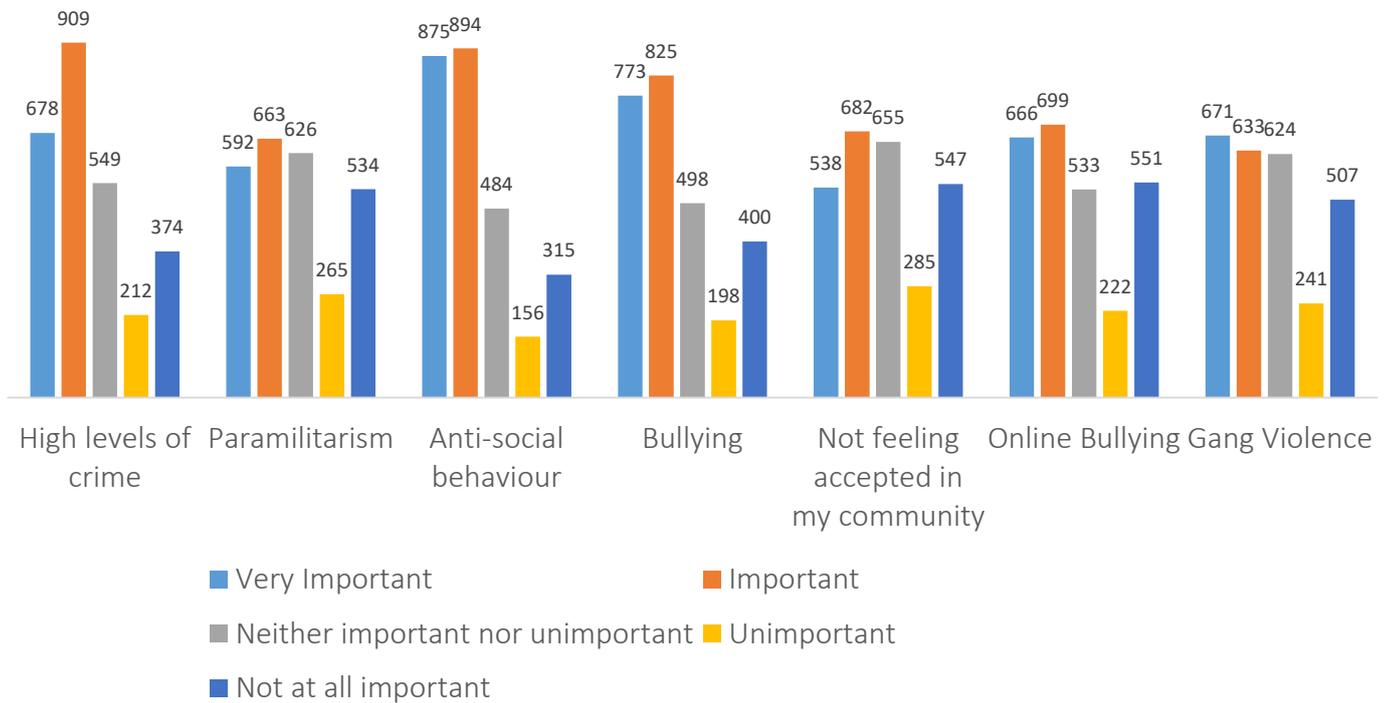
Youth Workers

Young People that you work with feel safe in their own community?



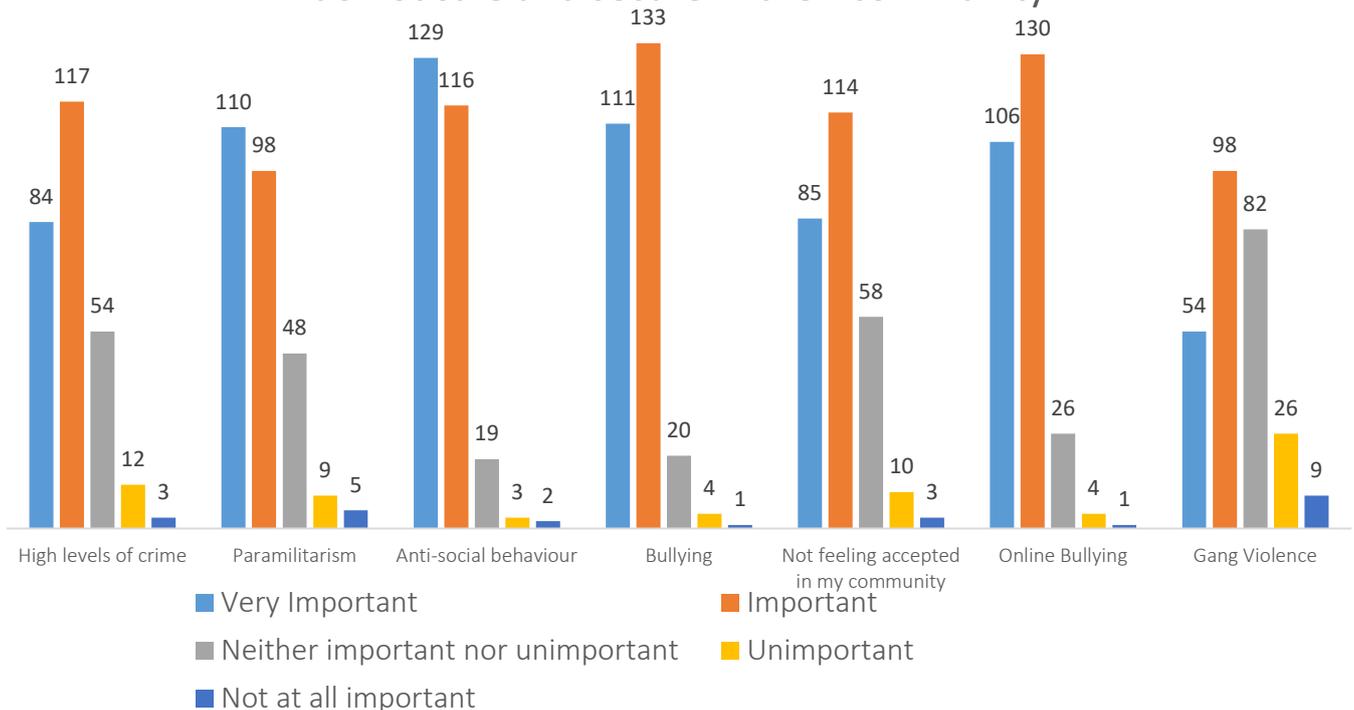
Young People

Living in Safety & Stability - Reasons for not feeling safe and secure in your community



Youth Workers

Living in Safety & Stability - Reasons you believe Young People do not safe and secure in their community



Children and Young People's Summary of Narrative Responses

- The main reason children and young people gave for not feeling safe in their own community was drug use and the increasing availability of drugs in their areas.
- This in turn led to anti-social behaviour and increased levels of crime in local communities.
- Some children and young people reported that the lack of a police presence made them feel less secure whilst others noted that a police presence led some to become involved in risk taking behaviours.
- Some children and young people noted that living in a segregated community meant they did not feel safe in their communities all the time.
- Paramilitarism was mentioned by some children and young people as a growing concern and many were fearful of paramilitary influence on local communities.
- Some children and young people also felt unsafe and afraid of being bullied because of their appearance or background.

Youth Workers' Summary of Narrative Responses

- Youth workers and volunteers also identified drug usage and its availability as an issue in some communities, especially among vulnerable children and young people.
- Rioting, organised fights and interface tensions were all growing areas for concern.
- Police behaviours in certain areas were also reported as issues which need to be addressed.
- Children and young people also feel threatened because they are different and there was a feeling that Youth Services could be providing more programmes to support these vulnerable children and young people.
- Community tensions and segregation continue to be issues both in rural and urban areas.

Still massive issues and fragmented communities including the polarisation of communities and entrenched negative values in relation to others including traditional 'green/orange' issues as well as discrimination projected onto others of other difference e.g race, religion, gender, nationality. Youth Worker



Discussion

Where one lives has a direct bearing on one's life chances and outcomes. Children and young people growing up in a stable, secure home and environment are more likely to achieve academically, have better health outcomes, more opportunities to participate in wider society and have better career opportunities.

A safe, secure and loving home environment as well as a school, Youth Service and community which is consistent and nurturing, makes a big difference for the most vulnerable children and young people in our society. However, there are many children and young people experiencing significant adversity in their home lives and within their communities which can have a negative impact on their education, health and social outcomes.

For these children and young people insecurity and transitions create stress which can threaten a child or young person's sense of belonging and security. A recent local consultation event with young people reported that Youth Services have a key role in providing safe and supportive environments in helping children and young people achieve their potential and to promote the positive role that children and young people can contribute to their local communities.

Of those children and young people who responded to the survey the majority, (81%), reported that they felt safe in their own community. The only discernible difference being among those who identified as gender other with only 70% feeling safe in their own community and also not feeling accepted in their community. Only 55% of youth workers and volunteers noted that the children and young people that they worked with felt safe in their own community.

The principle reasons given by children and young people for not feeling safe were anti-social behaviour, bullying and online bullying and high levels of crime. Youth workers and volunteers also noted that these were the most common reasons given for children and young people not feeling safe in their own community. Children and young people who experience bullying are more likely to miss school or attend a youth centre, feel safe, happy or achieve, be healthy and are less likely to make a positive contribution to their community.

Young people at an engagement event suggested that some of the reasons why anti-social behaviour and crime occurred was due to easy access to alcohol and drugs, lack of a police presence, poor lighting and limited CCTV and youth centres not being open at weekends or when they were needed most. Young people discussed the possibility of a multi-agency approach, including the voice of young people, to tackle these issues and the importance of accountability from all stakeholders and partners was stressed. It is also important to note that children and young people reported that youth centres are places where they feel safe.

Research has shown that as children and young people are spending more time on social media they are more vulnerable to being victims of child sexual exploitation.⁴² Engaging in sexting or the sharing of inappropriate sexual images between adults or their peers can lead to bullying or blackmail and can have a detrimental effect on a child or young person's mental health and resilience. Young people at an engagement event recognised the growing concerns young people had around child sexual exploitation and supported the development of new digital resources and programmes to help children and young people develop virtual resilience, including

⁴² <https://www.knowsleyscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/7-Minute-Briefing-CSE-and-Social-Media.pdf>

good digital and social media habits and a better understanding of their online presence.

Internal EA research revealed that children and young people were increasingly concerned about gang violence and arranged fights. These are being organised through social media and reportedly by gangs along sectarian or territorial lines. The Police Service of Northern Ireland have confirmed that this is growing concern.

Children and young people reported that they would welcome the opportunity to discourage others from engaging in anti-social behaviour and becoming involved in organised fights by employing outreach or detached teams of youth workers to provide support and guidance. Another worrying development was the anecdotal reported increase in the number of young people carrying and using knives.

Paramilitarism is a reality for many in Northern Ireland and also a growing threat to children and young people, particularly those from the most deprived communities where paramilitaries exert the greatest control. A recent report noted that without a functioning Executive and the uncertainty regarding Brexit ending paramilitarism

is now more difficult.⁴³ Paramilitary activity is also linked to criminality and organised crime and children and young people from deprived communities are more susceptible to be influenced and become involved. At a recent engagement event young people recognised the threat posed by paramilitary organisations in their areas. They were able to articulate how children and young people could become involved. It was also noted that the police were not always welcomed or trusted in some communities. Young people supported the idea of community partnerships, based on trust and respect, involving all key stakeholders to provide children and young people with alternative, positive opportunities.

Another report noted that children and young people who have been exposed to paramilitaries, either as victims or witnesses, have mental health issues, endure feelings of anger and fear, have suicidal thoughts and use alcohol and drugs as coping mechanisms.⁴⁴ Children and young people recognised and supported the work of Youth Services in delivering lawfulness programmes to support these vulnerable children and young people at challenging times in their lives.





Establishing Areas for Action

Establishing Areas for Action

Youth Work Priorities

Priorities for Youth outlines five key areas for the planning and delivery of Youth Services:

- Raising Standards for All.
- Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access & Equality.
- Developing the Non-Formal Education Workforce.
- Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment.
- Transforming Governance and Management of Non-formal Education.

Based on this assessment of need, regional planning for Youth Services should consider key areas for actions within this policy context to develop and deliver effective Youth Services for children and young people.

Raising Standards for All

Area of Action: Delivering on Assessed Need

Youth Services should establish outputs that ensure all services are delivered to meet the assessed needs of children and young people and ensure that resources are allocated based on need.

Area of Action: Proportionate Reporting on Youth Service Outcomes

In line with Priorities for Youth, Youth Services should develop clear outputs that will provide evidence of the impact of Youth Work on the lives of children and young people, measure success, and provide a proportionate reporting framework reflective of funding and service delivery.

Area of Action: Stakeholder Engagement and Research

Youth Services should ensure the voice of children and young people remains present in shaping and

planning services to meet the needs of all children and young people. This assessment of need has also identified the need for more in-depth research within each area of enquiry with a particular focus of identifying how Youth Services can effectively address the need in delivery.

This area of action should also safeguard and ensure that decisions are evidence based and critically reflect on the planning and delivery of services.

Area of Action: Quality Assurance

The EA should ensure that both statutory and voluntary funded youth work are delivering quality services that meet the needs of children and young people.

Area of Action: Promotion of Service and Opportunities

The survey with children and young people has demonstrated a lack of awareness of Youth Services available to children and young people. More specifically, children and young people not engaged in Youth Services do not fully understand the opportunities available to them. This area of action is key to ensure children and young people are aware of the service opportunities open to them, to increase the participation of children and young people and to promote the outcomes and benefits of Youth Services.

Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equality

To ensure a greater focus on service delivery this assessment of need recommends that under this priority there are only six areas of action informed by the areas of enquiry. Therefore, Youth Services should develop outputs to meet the needs of children and young people under the following areas of action:

- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Learning and Achieving**
- **Good Relations**
- **Participation** (with the exception of participative structures for young people)

- **Inclusion, Diversity and Equality of Opportunity**
- **Living in Safety & Stability.**

This will not only provide a greater focus for the planning and delivery of services but will also enable the service to report on the impact of youth work on the Children and Young People’s strategy. When developing outputs under this priority and areas for action, consideration should be given to developing outputs which will meet the needs of:

- LGBTQ young people
- Children and young people looked after
- Children and young people with learning and physical disabilities
- Newcomer children and young people
- Children and young people from the Travelling Community.

Furthermore, evidence from desktop research and the online survey places a particular emphasis on the need to provide quality generic provision for children and young people. Providing a high quality universal service will assist in limiting the need for early intervention or targeted services for children and young people as they progress into adulthood.

Respondents to the survey also highlighted the need to recognise children and young people’s contribution to participating in youth work programmes, projects or generic provision. Youth Services should consider a range of locally and nationally recognised certifications or accreditations to meet the needs of children and young people.

Developing the Non-Formal Education Workforce

Area of Action: Workforce Development

Youth Services should ensure all staff are trained to best respond to the current needs of children and young people. Succession planning will also be key to ensuring Youth Services are always resourced to continually meet this need.

Area of Action: Practice Development and Support

Youth Services should establish outputs that ensure support is in place for staff to deliver quality youth work practice and provide support systems and processes for staff. This area should also develop outputs that will ensure staff are supported to evaluate youth work effectively, measure and evidence learning outcomes and demonstrate the positive impacts of their practice.

Area of Action: Volunteer Development

Volunteers remain key to the successful delivery of youth work provision for children and young people. It is important that Youth Services develop outputs to ensure volunteers are effectively supported, encouraged to volunteer in Youth Services and are recognised for their contribution both locally and regionally across the sector.

Improving the Non-Formal Learning Environment

Area of Action: Participative Structures

The voice of children and young people in the design and delivery of services is a key feature of youth work. This is embedded within the Priorities for Youth policy. This area of action should develop outputs that ensure the meaningful role and voice of children and young people in the design and delivery of services and the decision making process with the goal of providing a modern, high quality provision that effectively meets the needs of children and young people.

Area of Action: Development & Maintenance of EA Youth Estate

The EA should continue to modernise its estate within the statutory capital allocation to provide a safe and welcoming environment that will effectively enable the service to meet and address the needs of children and young people.

Consideration should also be given to outputs under this action that ensure the environment reflects the principles outlined in the Community

Relations, Equality and Diversity policy (CRED) to ensure youth work environments promote a culture and ethos of inclusion.

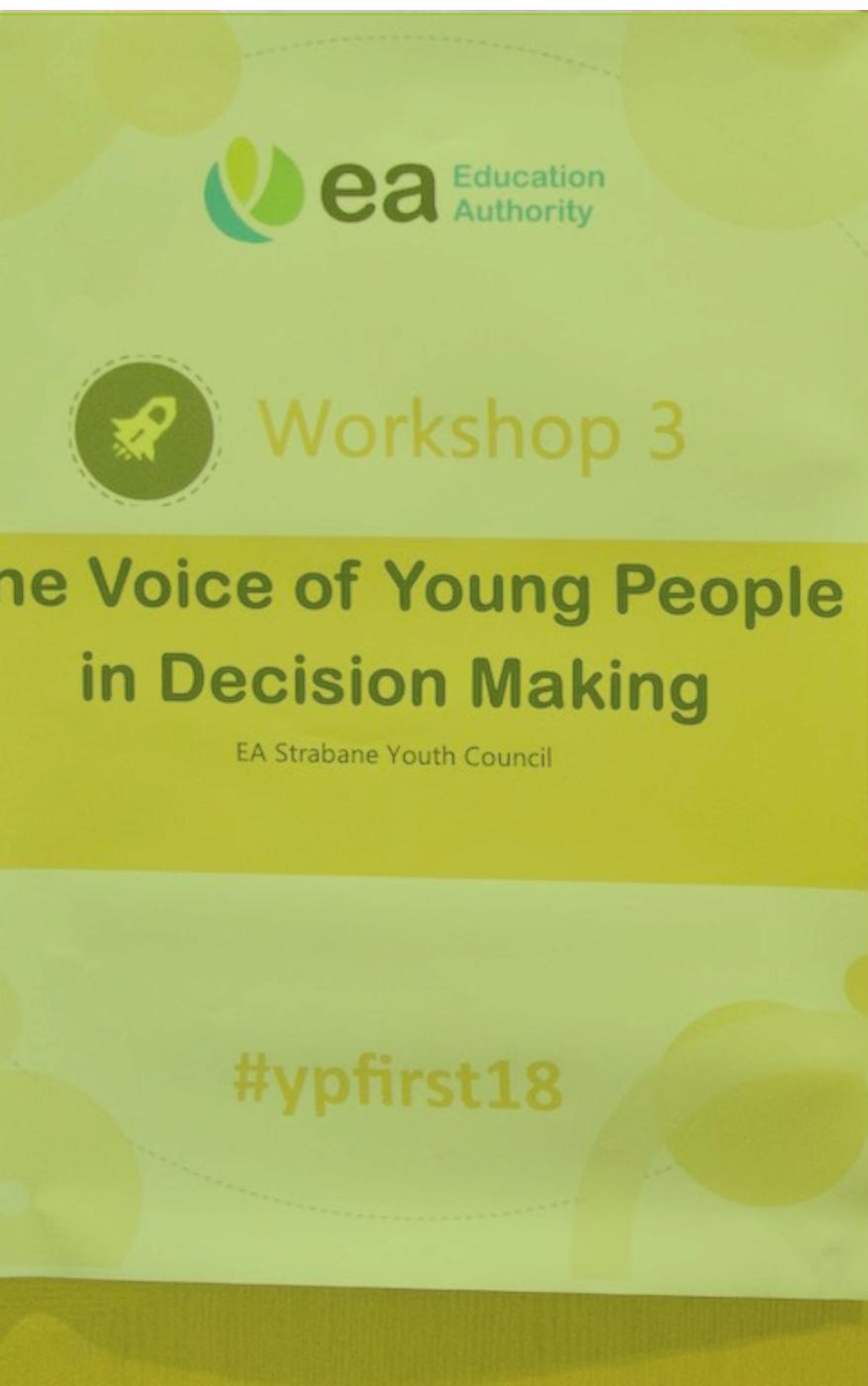
Area of Action: Digital Transformation of Youth Service

As outlined in Priorities for Youth, Youth Services should continue to develop its ICT infrastructure to enable the digitalisation of services to reduce administration and bureaucracy and improve reporting and decision making. Youth Services should consider all systems and processes that can be provided online using a digital first focus not digital only.

Transforming Governance and the Management of Non-Formal Education

Area of Action: Funding Scheme for Voluntary Youth Organisations

As outlined in Priorities for Youth, Youth Services should fully implement the new Funding Scheme arrangements for Regional and Local Voluntary Youth Organisations and ensure it effectively meets the needs of children and young people.



Summary of Recommend Areas of Action 2020-2023

Youth Work Priority: Raising Standards for All	
1.1	Delivering on Assessed Need
1.2	Proportionate Reporting on Youth Service Outcomes
1.3	Stakeholder Engagement & Research
1.4	Quality Assurance
1.5	Promotion of Service and Opportunities

Youth Work Priority: Closing the Performance Gap, Increasing Access and Equality	
2.1	Health and Wellbeing
2.2	Learn and Achieve
2.3	Good Relations
2.4	Participation
2.5	Inclusion, Diversity & Equality of Opportunity
2.6	Living in Safety and Stability

Youth Work Priority: Developing the Non-Formal Education Workforce	
3.1	Workforce Development
3.2	Practice Development & Support
3.3	Volunteer Development

Youth Work Priority: Transforming the Non-Formal Learning Environment	
4.1	Participative Structures
4.2	Development & Maintenance of EA Youth Estate
4.3	Digital Transformation of Youth Service

Youth Work Priority: Transforming Governance and the Management of Education	
5.1	Funding Scheme for Voluntary Youth Organisations

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